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桜木桜 illust. 屡那

Otherworld Nation Founding Chronicles

— Isekai Kenkokuki —

- Volume 2 - The Lavender Princess and the Right of Succession

**-Author-
Passing Villagers**

[Isekai Shousetsu]

Story

気がついたら知らない森の中で、
知らない子供の姿になっていた。

**そこは神獣グリフォンが住む、
人間が踏み入ってはならない森だった。**

だが、その子供が異世界から転生したこと、
精神が大人であることを知ったグリフォンは、
森に立ち入ったことを許す代わりに、
あることを依頼する。
そして子供に**アルムス**という名をつけた。



**グリフォンの依頼とは、森に捨てられた
子供たちが独り立ちするまで
面倒を見る、というものだった。**

3年間は、食料だけはグリフォンが
用意してくれるという。

アルムスは前世の知識と経験を生かし、
30人の子供たちとともに3年後の自立を目指す。

畑を作り、農具を工夫し、
子供たちの将来のために勉強を教え……
隣国の王の知遇も得て、
村の生活は徐々に安定していった。

そんなある日、村に**難民の一行**が現れる。どうやら近隣の国で、
**森の奥にグリフォンに守られた楽園が
あるという噂**が広まっているらしい。

そしてついに、楽園を手に入れようと**侵略を企む国**が現れた！

**アルムスは村と子供たちを
守ることができるのか!?**



Character



アルムス

前世は日本の大学生。
養護施設育ちのせい、
子供たちの面倒を見るだけ
でなく、健康な成長や
将来の自立にも心を砕く。



テトラ

森に捨てられた子供のひとり。
利発で思慮深く、周回
諸國の地理や政治情勢に
も詳しいが、畑仕事など
には疎い。



ユリア

アルムスたちから薬草を買っ
たことで知り合った少女。
優れた呪術師だが、その
せいで友達がいなかった。



ロン

アルムスが現れるまで子供
たちのリーダーだった少年。
アルムスに対してはちょっと喧
嘩腰だが、責任感は強い。



ロズワード

ロン以上に高圧的でアル
ムスに反発するが、あるこ
とがきっかけでアルムスを
「兄さん」と慕うようになる。



ソヨン

ロンと同じ村出身の幼馴染。
いつもロンと仲良く
口げんかをしている。



Julia

「いつもアルムス君にお世話になっている
ユリアと申します」



Obeyan

「ばれちゃいましたか？」



Rosalind

「兄さんは何の縁もない
俺たちを助けてくれた」



Ron

「別にお前のことを完全に
認めたわけじゃないんだぞ」



Telora

「みんな、ここが、
あなたが好きってこと。
それだけ」



Almis

「安心しろ。
ここにみんなは
いなくなったりしないよ」



「ファランクスは知ってますよね」

バルトロ・ポンペイウス

ファランクスというのは、とても分かり易く説明するなら長い槍と盾を持って敵に突っ込むという、とても単純な戦術である。

「あれ、要するにただの押し合いなので時の運と士気頼りなんですよ」

「側面を騎兵で攻撃するというのはどうだ？」

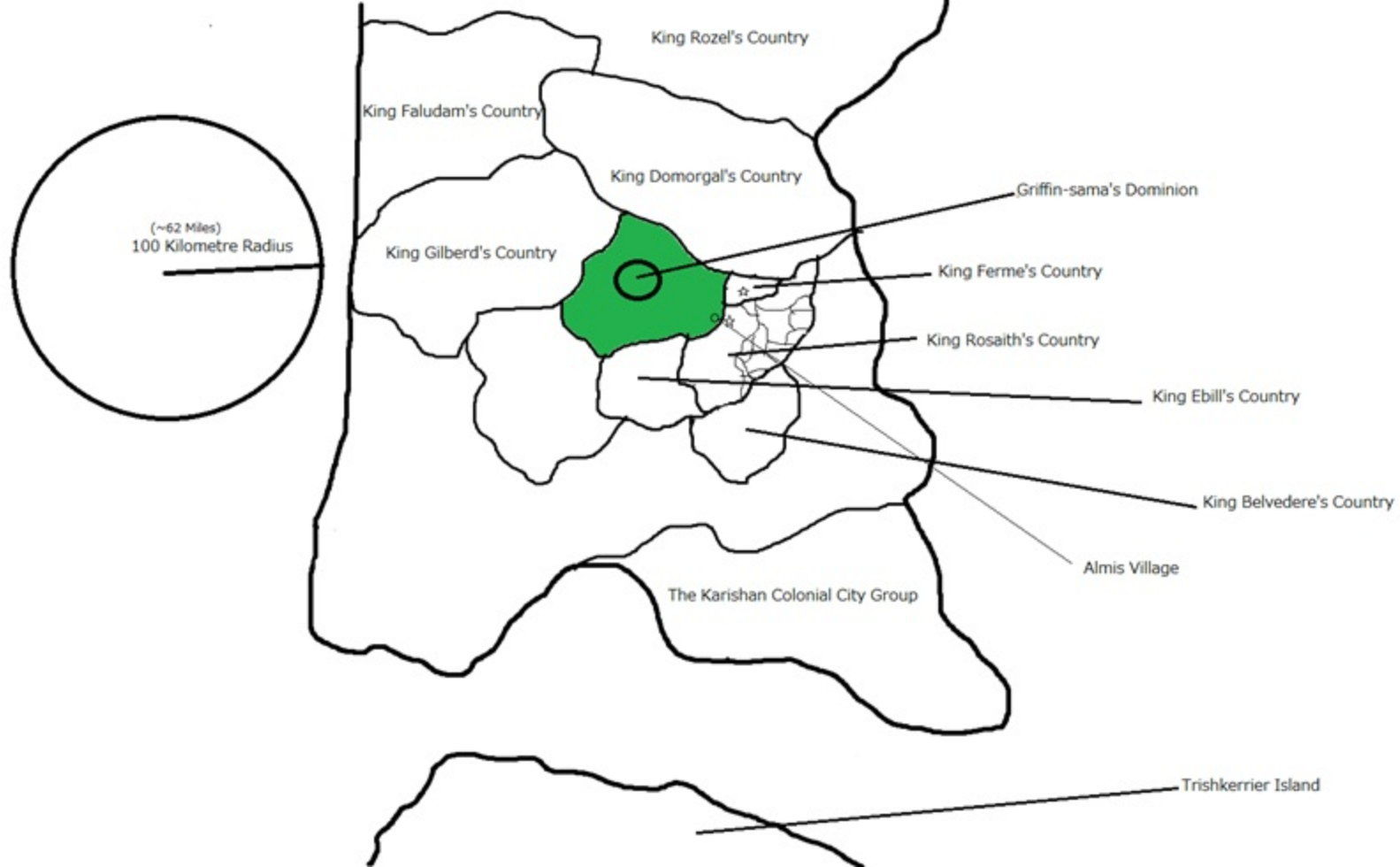
長い槍を全員で持っているファランクスは基本、前以外進めないので側面を攻撃されると一瞬で総崩れになる。だから普通は軽歩兵や騎兵で側面の守りを固める。

「それは考えましたが、騎兵が用意できません」

「……じゃあ、敵の弱点の

右側を叩くために

あえて左側に戦力を集中配置するのは？」



CHAPTER 41

MANUFACTURING

“Ahhnn... nnnn... Ahnn... There... Ah... Aaahh... Good...”

Tetra said in a sexy voice.

I add strength to my movements.

“Aahh... nnahh... That’s... too... strong... hya!”

Tetra said in an agitated voice.

She can barely breathe as she tries to look at me from her back with her moist, sexy eyes.

I can’t believe the usually cool Tetra would be capable of such passion and emotion.

I increase further the strength that leaves my fingertips.

“Hyaa... DAME... nnnn! Aaahh, kkuhha!”

I then lighten my movements.

“Ahh... harder... stronger!... hyaa!”

I trace Tetra’s body on top of her clothes with my finger. Surprised by the sensation, Tetra’s body shakes in pleasure.

“You don’t have to push yourself you know? Let’s get this over quickly.” I said to Tetra as my fingers crawled over her body.

Tetra’s body shook in pleasure.

“...Please don’t tease me...” said Tetra in a sweet voice as she faced me.

But just now...

“Didn’t you ask me to stop?”

“...Bully... nnnfwaa... nnn... don’t but continue...”

I don’t get it.

“Then what should I do?”

“Aa... Caress me harder...”

“Does it hurt?”

Then Tetra said as her cheeks blushed:

“Aa... it feels better when it hurts...”

This Girl... it can’t be helped huh?

I grinned as I slowly put strength in my movements.

“Hiyaa!... nnkuh... dame!... haaa... fuhaa...”

You just said “don’t” right now huh?

“Kafuu... Don’t stop!... more!”

“What a willful little girl. Really. Since you want it, I’ll give it to you.” I said as I teasingly used my fingers on her.

Tetra convulsed and said with an agitated voice:

“Pl... Please! There!!! My... ahh! Caress me there!”

I don’t get it. If only she’d tell me once clearly.

I take a hard look at Tetra.

She looks so agitated. She’s breathing roughly too. If I continue to tease her like this, surely she’d be too pitiful. I guess it’s no use. Let’s just do as she wants!

“Aah! It came!”

“Ttha... ffuahh!... hhea... nnkuuaaa... nn... nnoo more! Aaaaaaaahhhh!”

Tetra’s body shook violently, her mouth half-open as she tried to gasp for air. Her saliva drips from her lips as she lay on the bed exhausted.

Then the door opened just at the same time.

“What the hell are you two doing so early in the morning!!! Hn... wa. What?” (Soyon)

“What’s wrong?” I asked the bewildered Soyon who just entered the room as I separate my hands from Tetra’s shoulders.

“Ummm... What were you doing?” (Soyon)

“Oh! Just a massage. We went to get the census done yesterday right? Just that we felt a little strained after that so we thought we’d help loosen each other up.”

It’s just the two of us taking turns massaging each other.

Of course, the results were well worth the trouble. We determined the population numbered around 32,423. With these, we should be able to collect taxes properly.

Come to think of it we agreed to conduct the census for Bartolo too. What a pain.

“So... What do you need Soyon?” (Almis)

Soyon’s face turned bright red.

“Ah!... No!... I misunderstood... Ah... No!... A letter from King Rosyth came!” Soyon said as she passed me the wood strips.

What could this be about?

“What did the letter say?” (Soyon)

“Well, to summarize: ‘Hurry up teach me the paper manufacturing method already!’ is written.” (Almis)

It's not like I could just teach it like that even though I've become a retainer. It should depend on the compensation after all.

"Tetra, Let's go." (Almis)

"Nooo... I want moar." Tetra said in a sweet voice after I shook her awake.

What is this girl saying?

I still haven't even gotten my turn yet.

"...You tease... Haa..." (Tetra)

Tetra arose while stretching her neck left to right. Bone cracking sounds went off as she stretched her body.

Then Tetra, who returned to her usual cold expression, turned to me and said:

"Okay, let's go."

"Wipe off your drool before that." (Almis)

Tetra turned bright red as she wiped off the drool on her lips.

"Alright, as I have requested in the letter, please proceed in teaching how to make paper." (Rosyth)

"Understood. But can you please promise me one thing?"

"What is it?"

I say the condition."

"First, as compensation, please give me wheat. Furthermore, can you promise me to not produce large quantities of paper immediately?"

I still look forward to making paper as the primary source of income for the Ars Territory since I reduced the tax rates for wheat after all.

Therefore, a large supply of paper in the market pushing down the price would not be

good.

“I see... I understand your circumstances. I’ll postpone operations for a year.” (Rosyth)

If possible two years, though I actually wanted three years reprieve. Can’t be helped.

I wrote the steps for paper manufacturing method on a piece of paper and handed it over to King Rosyth. He received it with satisfaction.

“By the way, do you know how to make iron?” (Rosyth)

“Well, if you say I can, I might be able to but only in principle I guess.” (Almis)

King Rosyth leaned forward excitedly. “TEACH ME!”

Well, I did learn about deoxidizing iron oxides but that was in science experiments in middle school.

It was more or less five so I could understand.

I think there’s no one who doesn’t know what a deoxidation reaction is. That is if they went through compulsory education. Besides, we also briefly touched on the subject in history so I can somewhat understand it.

“Yes, but I only have second-hand knowledge on the matter so it’s not like I can manufacture iron with certainty. Please take that into account. Also, I want more wheat as compensation.” (Almis)

“There’s no problem. However, the wheat will come after my forges can produce iron goods.” (Almis)

Well, it’s only natural. By all means, you’d want the smiths to succeed in making iron goods.

“Yes, but first we need to prepare charcoal and iron ore.”

Iron ores are made up of iron oxide. You use the charcoal in the smelting process to isolate the iron in the ore.

“Also, Iron working would need high temperatures.”

“I told you to teach me the method.”

What an impatient fellow.

“We would also need to use a tool called a ‘bellow.’ It should be easy to make, probably.”

I teach King Rosyth how to make bellows. It’s kind of difficult explaining verbally, huh.

After this you’ll have a spongy ball of molten iron and charcoal residue. You’ll then need to hammer out the impurities from this spongy substance. At the very least, you’ll be able to make iron from this. This is the most I know on the matter.

I’m not a smelting specialist after all. We didn’t learn that much in school after all. This is the limit of my knowledge. They could make bronze after all, so this explanation should suffice.

“Yes, this is enough. I’ll send the grains upon the iron’s successful manufacture.”
(Rosyth)

Alright, with this we’ll get more wheat.

“Then, please teach me how to make fire medicine next.” (Rosyth)

Fire medicine?

Ah! Gunpowder, huh.

“Unfortunately, gunpowder ingredients are currently at their limits. Besides, only I know how to make it. I think that circulating its manufacturing method would be dangerous.” (Almis)

“Does that mean you won’t be able to teach it?” (Rosyth)

“That would be correct.”

King Rosyth lets out a sigh as he heard my reply.

“Then it can’t be helped. Certainly, it would be bothersome should King De Morgal begin to use gunpowder too. For the meantime, I’ll content myself with iron.” (Rosyth)

Thank goodness. Your understanding would clearly save me the trouble.

“So, are your territorial affairs going smoothly? You border King De Morgal’s Territory you know?”

“Well, it’s passable. I’m still not used to managing territory but I’m getting by thanks to Bartolo-san’s help.” (Almis)

Wait, thinking back, Bartolo hasn’t seem to have done anything, hasn’t he?

“Is that so? Good. Then I shall give advice as well.”

Advice? Advice straight from King Rosyth himself?

“Listen, Pay diligence to your relations with your neighbors. A lot of them do not think highly of lords after all.” (Rosyth)

“Yes, I understand” (Almis)

Managing social relationships is important after all. Like in my wedding, for example, we received lots of well wishes and flattery.

“Did you know that Bartolo’s child was just born?” (Rosyth)

“Yes, I heard.” (Almis)

When Bartolo’s wife was giving birth, I advised him to use hot water to disinfect all the tools and to use alcohol to disinfect their hands. This is to significantly reduce the risk of the child dying from contracting postpartum infections.

“That guy had probably prepared for festivities in advance. You should go. Everyone from your clan should prepare for a present. Yes... I think honey would be a great gift.” (Rosyth)

It’s not like you had to tell me. That was what I intended to do all along. What should we do for the gifts? Certainly, it would be absurd for each of us to bring honey. I need to think about this.

“Also, there’s one more thing I have to tell you.”

“Yes?”

“Be careful of Regal DeBell and the DeBell clan. They consider you as an enemy and a threat to their family. Besides, I hear nothing but bad rumors about the guy.”

The DeBell clan, is it? If I remember correctly, they were the most powerful clan in the Rosyth Kingdom before I got landed. Certainly, there's little to no difference between the population of my territory and theirs. Sigh, I wanted to have good relations if possible but...

“But please be at ease. I also hate the DeBell clan. Bartolo hates them too. In fact, a third of the powerful clans hate the DeBell clan. Do you get what I mean?” (Rosyth)

It means I should be at the head of the Anti-DeBell faction, huh. Sigh, I hate troublesome things. But it can't be helped since the hostility comes straight from the other party.

“I'll think about it.” (Almis)

“It's not like you have to think about it. I think it's the natural course of action. Conduct yourself skillfully. I'm expecting great things from you after all.” (Rosyth)

King Rosyth stared at me intently. What's up with the stare, dude.

“I would live for three years more at most. That's why I want you see great accomplishments from you as a lord within a year.”

“Accomplishments?”

In one year, huh. Why does this king want accomplishments from me before he dies? Is it to contain the DeBell clan?

Furthermore...

“Subjugating King Ferrum, Manufacturing Iron, and Manufacturing Paper. Normally, they would be more than enough accomplishments. However, considering the circumstances, they are not enough. Do great deeds in the management of your territory. And hold fast your land against King De Morgal. If you accomplish such...” (Rosyth)

“I understand. I’ll do my utmost.” (Almis)

What could he possibly want to say...



Three months later, I received a letter from King Rosyth. It reads:

It seems the iron smelting was a success. Unfortunately, the strength was unusually weak so we couldn’t put it to good use. We did, however, managed to trade them to Cretian smiths for a lot of salt.

Perhaps they thought that if they left it as it is then it would become so that we could make iron, so they thought that before we could make profits on it they should just make the profits on it.

Though you might say its not fit for use, iron is still iron. It is for that reason that the Cretians overlooked the quality.

I will send the wheat immediately. It’s a favor I’ll certainly return so long as I live.

“Well, so long as I get the wheat I don’t have any problems.” (Almis)

CHAPTER 42

PRESENTS

“Hey... what’cha doin?” (Almis)

“I’m making a wand” (Tetra)

A Wand? Tetra is putting together parts-like objects to make something. She’s putting several disks the size of an adult’s wrist on one thin rod. The disks were lined with geometrical patterns. Crystals were embedded on their tips.

“Teach me about it. (Almis)

“Alright” (Tetra)

Tetra raises her arms and makes her small white palms face me. My hair then sways lightly. She had cast wind magic.

“High-level sorcerers around my level can use magic without magic squares. However...” As she said this, Tetra takes out a piece of paper and begins drawing a magic square. She then faces me just like before. This time, the geometric patterns shine brightly and a stronger wind blows towards me.

“If you use a magic square, the efficacy of the magic invocation becomes better. And since you can only use magical power that you yourself have, using a magic square can make you use magic indefinitely.” (Tetra)

I see. Even though I’m not a magician, I was paying attention only to using magic, but there are also advantages like that, huh?

“But, there’s one problem. Since a magic square is something fixed, you can only use the same amount of power and the same kind of magic. Thus, it’s not really practical in battle. Plus, the amount of information you can embed in a paper-based magic square is limited.” (Tetra)

Certainly. It’s not applicable for battle. What makes magic appealing after all is that you can vary your approach against the enemy. It’s no different from just throwing

spears against the enemy if you can only use one type of magic. It's not something you carry in large quantities.

According to Tetra, the strength of the magic depends upon the size of the magic square. Therefore, you'd need quite a large square just to be able to hurt a person. The size would make it totally useless.

"That's why I'm carving up a magic square on a round wooden board (disk). I need to carefully embed information on the magic squares one by one. And when you bind together several disks..." (Tetra)

Tetra points a finished wand at me. It shines brightly and thereafter blows an even stronger wind. It has quite the power.

"Furthermore, if you rotate the connection like this, you can now use a completely different type of magic." (Tetra)

Tetra then rotates several disks. She points upwards then a flame rages from the wand.

"But then what would you do about the power?" (Almis)

The disks are quite smaller than the paper magic squares. Saying you'll put together more and more is somewhat...

"That won't be a problem."

Tetra confidently declares.

"Listen here, using the previous magic square, the amount of information embedded is represented by the quadratic/square formed by the X (horizontal) axis and the Y (vertical) axis. Using this wand, however, you add a third Z (height) axis. Therefore the amount of information embedded would turn cubic! (Tetra)

You... when the hell did you get so smart?

"So, what about the crystal?" (Almis)

"It's from an ornament we received from a person named 'Regal DeBell.' Since it's an ornament, it's somewhat useless so I disassembled it. A high quality transparent crystal can transmit 99% of magic without sully magical style. It also helps with

fire-based magic. Since the main body of the wand is wooden, it would burn should you use fire magic. But if you attach the crystal then the problem would be solved since it doesn't burn. Plus, it looks cooler this way." (Tetra)

I see. I completely don't understand. Yes. Yes.

Regal, huh. I'm sorry but my wife just went and disassembled your gift.

"By the way, Almis. You seem to have something on your mind? Is there anything wrong?" (Tetra)

"It's just that Bartolo's wife had recently given birth, right? I don't know what kind of gift I should bring for the birth celebrations."

I asked Bartolo and he said you'd typically give booze. Of course, the sponsor would naturally bring out liquor. But participants are encouraged to bring more so everyone could drink and get drunk, he said. Now that I think of it, a lot of the different clans each brought some kind of liquor when we held our wedding. I guess the next logical thing would be to bring something like an ornament, or a charm, or some high-class clothing or something for the child to use.

"Wouldn't honey be fine? Even King Rosyth said so. Look, you can't bring that much at the party right?" (Tetra)

"Certainly... Hmmm... paper would... paper would be strange for a gift, no? I guess I should stop worrying and just bring some liquor or maybe food, yes?" (Almis)

"But can you prepare something delicious for them?" (Tetra)

Well, the bread that we make is very delicious. But how would they read bringing bread as a gift? It's a staple food, you know. Nevertheless, it's surely more delicious than what Bartolo could prepare.

Ahh. This is not working. My honor would shatter at this rate.

Even if Bartolo brought out even the most basic food and ingredients, it should still be a no-go. Then I guess, it really should be the liquor, huh.

"Did you come up with anything?" (Tetra)

“Well. I guess I’ll make some spirits (distilled alcohol).” (Almis)

The alcohol content of this world’s liquor is unusually low. When you speak of wines, then it’s basically grape juice infused with a little alcohol. Rather than for getting drunk, they usually treat it as hydration or something to make hard water on the Adernia peninsula easier to drink.

It’s also expensive but only 3% alcohol. Furthermore, it can go higher up to 5% but the highest it can go is only 10%. I only measure it by my taste, by the way.

Spirits have around 40% alcohol so it should certainly be well-received. As for wine, we have those stocked by King Ferrum and those we made in the village.

Then I can make enough spirits to serve the banquet.

There’s no time for it to mature so I can’t guarantee it would taste good but it won’t matter anyway since the wine in the Adernia Peninsula doesn’t taste good from the very beginning. I can only compensate for the taste with the higher alcohol content. Everybody likes booze that can get you drunk over those that taste good anyway. I should be able to hit the bullseye by mixing the spirits with grape juice.

It’s been around six months since Bartolo’s child was born. We’re in the fifth month of the year now.

Therefore, I still have a month before the big day.

The process for making spirits is simple. I should just reproduce the distillation of the water-ethanol mixture experiment I did when I was in middle school.

It’s just that there’s one problem.

“I need some special equipment, huh.” (Almis)

“Then isn’t it hopeless?” (Tetra)

“No. We should be fine. I can just make it.”

Even though I can’t make a flask, I can just use some bronze container as a substitute. Shall I ask help from the blacksmiths?

“But, milord, the swords and spears for the tax would be...” (Blacksmith)

“You can make it later. I’ll give you a two-month extension. Don’t worry, I’ll properly buy pay for the Bronze flask with some wheat.” (Almis)

The blacksmiths became a little surprised as they heard my answer.

“...You... you’ll pay for the bronze flask, milord?”

“Yes. It’s not a tax after all. Except in cases of war, calamity, or when there’s an emergency need for goods, I won’t be taking special taxes.”

They’ll be more motivated in making the flask should it be for selling and not for taxation.

Blacksmiths are precious personnel. I won’t be pressuring them or screwing them over.

Besides, I have enough stocks from those I received from King Rosyth and Bartolo. As for foreign goods, we’ll earn them through trading paper and honey.

Smiles float in the faces of the blacksmiths as they say “We’ll certainly do our best” and bid their exit.

“Hey, Almis.” (Tetra)

“Hmm? What is it?” (Almis)

“Would we have enough equipment for our new recruits?” (Tetra)

“Aren’t they enough? What’s costing us is the recruitment process which will take more time to complete. While we don’t have reserves, each one is guaranteed a gear.”

We also have the gear confiscated from King Ferrum’s army and the gear he kept in storage, after all. It’s kind of thanks to King Ferrum that we’re swimming in gear.

Besides, the kind of gear soldiers use in the Adernia Peninsula is basically the portable-type. So you can just exchange or swap away the gear that’s become excessively awful.

“At the very least, I’d want to collect nothing less than bronze equipment. Wooden shields are too much after all.” (Almis)

A lot of wooden shield wielding soldiers comically died from Gram’s arrows from the last battle. Wooden shields can’t defend from high-efficiency arrows.

“As for the armor, I’d prefer leather-based ones.” (Unsure, probably Almis)

“Bronze armor is heavy, after all. Also, what’s more important in battles is maneuverability.” (Probably Tetra)

You also need considerable strength when performing hoplite assaults. As expected, Leather armor would be desirable.

Well, our body strength is considerably higher since we are under the influence of my divine protection so we could still probably have some leeway when using bronze gear.

Come to think of it, how far does my divine protection extend? Although Julia said something about it being related to loyalty. Something around that value of that, huh?

At the very least, the lot from King Ferrum’s kingdom don’t hold any shred of loyalty to me. I could say the same for the refugees. It’s generally the kids (though they aren’t kids anymore now) I saved a long time ago who’s receiving the influence of my divine protection.

Wasn’t the first time my divine protection manifested when I saved Roswald? The kids then were still normal. This means that it began changing gradually around the time when we were around 10 to 14 years old. Therefore, at the very least, the divine protection’s influence should take at the minimum 4 years to take effect on someone. No, the children who’s always been together with me and the people from the Ars Clan should be different.

If you think about it... No... this shouldn’t work. I shouldn’t rely on divine protection. It’s a complicated matter, huh.

However, my physical ability right now is certainly much different than from when I was in the village. This means the hurdle on the divine protection affecting my physical ability and the hurdle on the divine protection spreading to everyone are different, right?

Besides, I don't even know when the Ars Clan began to slowly gain loyalty to me.

"Almis? Are you still with me?" (Tetra)

"Ah! Sorry, sorry. I'm alive and kicking. I was just thinking, is all." (Almis)

I guess it's useless overthinking it. I don't understand it yet, after all.

CHAPTER 43

TAX COLLECTORS

The new lord is a reasonable man.

That's how the people of the Ars Territory see their new ruler.

At present, there's no military conscription. If you do labor, he'll compensate with a wage. Taxes are surprisingly low. Furthermore, he gave people who normally can't do agriculture like widows a special job, that of making paper.

'Yes. It's not a tax after all. Except in cases of war, calamity, or when there's an emergency need for goods, I won't be taking special taxes.' These words he said to the surprised blacksmiths have spread across the Ars territory in the blink of an eye.

King Ferrum was notorious for frequently requisitioning goods while King Ragou Ars was known for asking for special taxes.

In contrast, Lord Almis doesn't do any of those.

The people are embracing him with great expectation.

At the same time, however, they also see him as someone who does strange things at times.

It's about the official post called the Tax Collector.

When you speak of the Tax Collectors, they would refer to the vassals that the current lord brought from the forest. You can also call them as knights.

They were unusually excellent in the martial arts and all of them could read, write, and calculate. All of them were dispatched to each village at the same time as the new lord was inaugurated.

Furthermore, they investigated the size of all the agricultural lands in each village and recorded them and their owners in paper.

To the people of the Ars Territory, they can only see this as eccentric behavior. They couldn't understand what's the point of doing them.

The Tax Collectors also said this:

"Listen well people, from here on out, we will be the ones who would come to collect the taxes. The village chief is still the one responsible for gathering the village's taxes so nothing much will change but it would be us who would come to get them. Please be at ease. However, we will never condone tax evasion or embezzlement."

For the village chiefs, this should mean that they would save time. Although they're doubting why they should accede to this way, they nevertheless agreed.

It will be in the sixth month when we will actually begin to collect the taxes.



"Hey, this isn't enough, you know? Is this really everything?" Ron asks as he glares at the village chief.

The village chief answers ingratiatingly. "Yes sir. That is everything. Do you have reason to believe that it's not enough, sir?"

"Yes. There's a large discrepancy between what you gave me and this area's projected harvest. We haven't heard anything about crop failure here." (Ron)

The projected harvest is amount of harvest derived from the analysis of the area's normal harvest as surveyed from the population, the size of the land, and the current year's weather. Even if the projection's off, barring exceptional disasters, there shouldn't be that much of a difference with the actual harvest.

Therefore, the village chief is suspect to embezzlement.

"Come, we'll investigate." Ron commands as he and Soyon proceed together to the village chief's house, shaking off the chief's repose.

The two carefully observe the village chief's house.

It was not a pit house, perhaps a reflection of the chief's social status. It's properly built with flooring.

“Hmm?”

Ron notices something out of place. He stabs the floor with the hilt of a sword. It somehow made a sound different to how it should be.

Ron and Soyon looks at each other. Meanwhile, the chief’s face turns pale.

Ron raises the sword and swings down towards the floor. The sword strikes the floor and makes a fissure. The duo put their hands through the crevice and pulled with just the two of them.

The floor makes a creaking sound as it turns over. Underneath is a wide space wherein a large amount of wheat is hidden.

“What is this?” (Ron)

“Umm... This is...” The village chief hesitates to say.

Ron speaks as he surveyed the wheat with cold eyes:

“This is embezzlement. It is a felony. About five lashes, if I recall correctly.” (Ron)

The village chief bends his knees and lowers his head deeply.

“Pl... Please!! I will give the Sir a third... No! Two-thirds of everything here! So... please!” (Chief)

“Don’t screw with me!!” (Ron)

Ron draws his sword and swings it.

The chief’s walking stick falls to the ground. His face turns ghastly pale.

“Bribery. I believe that’s also five lashes.” (Ron)

“Please have mercy!” (Chief)

“Tell that to the lord.” (Ron)

Ron and Soyon leaves after making the villagers load the wheat into the horse cart.



“This is the 12th case. Embezzlement and bribery are too rampant!” (Ron)

“There are a lot of village chiefs embezzling taxes. That’s why there’s a phenomenon that even if you slap on high taxes, you won’t be able to gather much.”

Yal says after they got together on the way. (Check) He’s still learning how to read and write so he’s accompanied by an assistant. He has also finished his rounds and is on the way back to Almis’ place.

“But Ron was so cool, you know.” (Soyon)

“Really? I practiced it you know. Leader is kind after all so I thought that we should go with a strict image.”

‘This flirting Baka-couple’ Yal can’t help but think as he smiles faintly looking at the couple.

“By the way, aren’t the horses insufficient? Not for the Knights, but for the stuff like tax collection, and land plowing. Don’t you think it’s better if we buy more?”

“Leader is thinking about buying more horses, you know? I heard he’s currently negotiating with the Cretian Merchant. “

“I see. But what do we do about the cost? Can we really buy horses with just paper?”

We’re currently in the process of manufacturing large quantities of paper, gathering together and employing widows and children in the Ars Territory. Having said that, there are also limits on the number of trees we can turn into paper.

As expected, can we really get and maintain that much horses?

“After we deliver these to the mansion’s storehouse, the next rounds would be the villages up north, huh. Since they’re kind of far, we’ll probably have to stay the night there. Sigh.”

“Well, we’ll be free soon after we finish the job so let’s just do our best for now. The most troubled among us now would be those two people after all.”



King Ferrum's Old Palace.

It has become Almis and Tetra's love nest. Presently, however, that love nest has disappeared and transformed into hell.

"The Hell! This is too much! This is just the quarter, huh..."

"Certainly, the present report mentioned only a quarter. More would probably be come later."

"I know, I know. I know already so please don't say it anymore."

We're firmly collecting the taxes after we made the family registers/census. I now see, this much is expected. I just never thought that this "as expected" would become so troublesome.

I was thinking why hasn't anybody else done this before? It's not that they don't do it. It's actually that they couldn't do it.

"Let's just ask help from Ron and the others when they come back. This is not something only two people can handle..."

"Agreed. I wonder if everyone will finish soon."

Everyone is doing their best right now going around the Ars Territory collecting taxes. They're certainly tired already. I'll really feel bad for them. But you see...

The two of us are even more exhausted!!

"Haa... We'll really be doing this every year at this season? At these rate, we'll die, you know!"

"Don't worry. By next year, we'll have 10 people ready for duty. In other words, we'll be able to add 10 people to the tax collectors. It'll be easier to do the job then... probably."

"But the highest we can go is only a hundred people right?..."

The kids I brought together with me number about a hundred people. In other words, the maximum number of bureaucrats would be a hundred people.

Right now, even if we relentlessly recruit even the young girls, we'd only have potentially 70 recruits. We'd only be able to increase the number of people we have 1.5 times.

"I guess we really need to develop human resources."

"Yeah. It's necessary. Let's discuss about it later.

This means the things I need to do have yet again increased by one. Sigh... I'm starting to accumulate stress.

"Hey... can I have a hit?" (Almis)

"Hmm? Nnha!" (Tetra)

I pressed my lips on Tetra's as I pushed her down.

"It's just to have a break, can I?" (Almis)

"Nnn... Have as much as you want..." (Tetra)

Tetra closes her eyes. I reach out my hand to Tetra's chest...

"Uhhh... I have a supplemental report, Sir..." (Lulu)

We make eye contact with Lulu. She averts her eyes in a panic then silently places the report on top of the table.

"Uhm... I guess please choose the place better?" declares Lulu as she exits.

.....

Awkward...

What to do... what to do...

"What do we do?" Tetra immediately looks at me and asks.

“Hmmm... I guess I’ll just have it at night. It’s kind of cooled down anyway. Besides...”

I have to quickly digest the new report.

CHAPTER 43.5

BRASSIERE

“Hey, Tetra. Can you show me your breasts?” (Almis)

“Hmm? It’s not like you have to ask permission. They’re yours so rub them whenever you feel like it.” (Tetra)

I’m so happy you just told me something amazing. But this time, it’s not about that.

“What’s that?” (Tetra)

“It’s underwear. I made it myself. I just want to check the size.” (Almis)

I put the handmade bra on Tetra’s chest. The size is perfect. I made sure to check the sizes everyday after all.

“How is it? How does it feel?” (Almis)

“...It feels... strange. But it doesn’t feel bad.” (Tetra)

“Is that so? Then it’s good.” (Almis)

There is no underwear in the Adernia Peninsula.

While they do wear something like a loincloth, more or less, you really can’t call that underwear.

I get severely bothered, after all. By those shaking breasts.

Well, seeing other people’s breast would be something like eye candy, but it’s my own wife’s breasts after all... So, they’re... good fortune? Well... Tetra’s breasts are about average, anyway.

“If you wear this, then your breasts won’t hang.” (Almis)

“Really? How many do you have?” (Tetra)

“For the meantime, I have one prototype but if you want I’ll make as many as you want.” (Almis)

“Then let’s make about five... teach me how to make one. I’ll make them myself.” (Tetra)

I don’t mind but... it’s kind of fun imagining Tetra’s breasts when making one of these. Refusing her for that reason would just make me a pervert, huh.

The two still did not know that many years later, bras would spread across the lands of the Adernia Peninsula.

CHAPTER 44

BUSINESS NEGOTIATIONS II

“I apologize for making you come all the way here.” (Almis)

“No, please. There’s no way I could make a prominent clan of the Rosyth Kingdom go out of their way.” Ains says cheerfully.

He purposely came all the way here after I sent him a letter telling him I’ll be inquiring about things I wanted to buy a week later.

“It’s getting late so please stay the night. We’ll be having a great feast, country-style!” (Almis)

“Then I shall take you up on your offer. We leave the negotiations for tomorrow.” (Ains)

At this night’s dinner...

I first introduced everyone by seating order. First is me at the seat of honor, at the second seat is Tetra, and at the third seat is Ains.

It’s normally the guest who should sit at the seat of honor but it’s one of those things that tend to happen if one is the feudal lord.

The next seats are occupied by Ron, Roswald, Gram, Soyon, and then Lulu. There’s really no deep meaning in the order.

And lastly would be Bolus, is what I wanted to say but he’s currently at a border fort under a new assignment. So, this time he’s absent.

Now, for the very important dinner menu!

First is the staple, white bread. I dare say this is the most delicious bread in this world today. We also prepared salt and honey, though I think everyone would probably go for the honey.

Next, are the appetizers which will start with the salad. We have vegetables from the

Ars Territory, vegetables and mushrooms from the mountains and some olive. It's supplemented with fish caught from the river and snail boiled in salt water. Though I won't be eating any of it.

Next is the main course. We will have a fat pig we slaughtered just for the occasion. It's a pig meat dish.

They eat a lot of pigs in this region. I was told the teats and womb of a virgin female pig were particularly exquisite. Although they say that, it doesn't sound particularly delicious to me.

I guess it's just a matter of taste around these parts.

Next is dessert – fruits, particularly grapes and such. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to prepare sugar so I couldn't make some pudding. I wanted to wow everyone after all.

Last is the most important – drinks. Specifically, the spirits.

I feel bad for Ains but I'm gonna have him taste test it for me. Will it be well received as expected?

"Cough... cough... Ah, I apologize. This liquor... is quite strong, yes? Though, it looks just like wine..." (Ains)

"They're called spirits. How are they?" (Almis)

Ains answers as he slowly drinks the liquor.

"If you could have known it beforehand that it would be strong then... Haahh, this throat burning-like sensation might become a habit. Just that... it seems like you could get drunk immediately even though you've only drank a few. I'll have to take note of this... By the way, this one would be...?" (Ains)

"Although I can't reserve that much, if it's just a little then you can go and sell them. Let's talk about it tomorrow." (Almis)

Ains lowers his head as an apology as I said so.

"By the way, has the Dragon Damascus Sword proven useful?" (Ains)

“Hmm... well...” (Almis)

I haven't been able to use it that much... I primarily use a spear after all. I guess the only time I used it was when I cut King Ferrum's head off, huh? I'm the type who believes some things are better left unsaid so...

“By the way, what kind of place is the Cretian Peninsula? If you don't mind, could you please tell me about it?” (Almis)

I forcibly change the topic a little. But it's true that I'm interested. We spent who knows how many years secluded in the forest after all so we're a little uninformed about the area.

“The Cretian Peninsula, is it? Well, the climate is about the same as the Adernia Peninsula. The number of city-states in the peninsula exceed a hundred and each of them repeatedly make and break war and alliances with each other.” (Ains)

I see. It's pretty much the same as the Adernia Peninsula.

“Well, yes, for the most part. The difference is each city-state is enclosed and protected by stone walls. Furthermore, should an external enemy invade the peninsula, each city-state would immediately cease all hostilities with each other and unite to repel the enemy.” (Ains)

“It's been a hundred years since the northern part of the Adernia Peninsula was dominated by the Gauls. Despite that, the southern states have remained in constant state of war.” (Almis) *(TL Note: the author (and ja.wiki-chan) actually distinguished between Gaul (Garia in Japanese) and Gallia (Garria in Japanese). The former specifically translates to the English term, while the latter to the Latin term. So I'll use Gaul)*

There's a place called Gaul further up north the Adernia Peninsula. The Rozel Kingdom, a Kingdom of the Gauls, has begun its invasion of the Adernia Peninsula.

It already seized the northern half of the peninsula and is continuing its advance southwards. Furthermore, the three kingdoms being pressured by the Rozel Kingdom – the De Morgal Kingdom, the Gillbed Kingdom, and the Fardam Kingdom are forced to move southwards. And in the south, is our Rosyth Kingdom meaning my territory is also under threat.

It's a collision course, huh.

Should the various countries of South Adernia cooperate, then they would probably be able to push the Rozel Kingdom back. Well, it's probably impossible.

"By the way, Lord Almis, where did you learn the Cretian language?" (Ains)

"From Tetra. She's half-Cretian after all." (Almis) Although before that, I relied on the divine protection.

"Really?... May I inquire the name of your mother?" (Ains)

Tetra assents to Ains' inquiry.

"She's goes by the name Helena. I was told it was love at first sight with my father when she traveled here to the Ars Territory." (Tetra)

"Madame Helena, is it...?" (Ains)

Ains drinks liquor as he mutters Helena, Helena.

"All I can imagine, when I hear about Cretia, is a very advanced country... but does it currently have a foreign enemy?" (Almis)

Cretian city walls are all made of stone. Only a few countries could achieve that in the Adernia peninsula.

Even though they have that much technological strength, I wonder if they would still have anything like external enemies?

"Yes, of course. There's a lot aiming their sights on very wealthy Cretia. Most notable of them all are the Persis Empire and Povenia." (Ains)

"Persis Empire? Povenia?"

I've never heard of them, huh. More importantly, where are they located?"

I can't imagine it as anything but located even farther than Cretia.

"Povenia is just a stone's throw away from the Adernia Peninsula. Do you know that

there's an island called Trisqueria a little south of the peninsula? Povenia is just a little farther south of that island." (Ains)

Ains drinks more liquor.

"They've been doing international maritime trade in the Tethys Sea since long ago. They haven't been very pleased with us Cretians taking away that trading. We're always at war, you know? Well, we're in the process of making the Tethys Sea our sea right now, anyway." (Ains)

The liquor seems to have made Ains drunk as he continued to bad mouth Povenia.

"How about the Persis Empire?" (Almis)

"The Persis Empire is... a huge country to the east of Cretia. These fellows are a really greedy bunch, you see. They invaded Cretia twice, you know. The first with 200,000 men, the second with around 300,000. Well, they're just numbers anyway." (Ains)

200,000 and 300,000...

The Rosyth Kingdom can't even compare in scale.

Naturally, that's probably not even the whole army. They should have 10,000 men-strong divisions stationed somewhere their vast border regions. The whole army would probably number around 400,000, no?

Even if all the tribes of the Rosyth Kingdom cooperate, we won't be able to assemble anything more than 50,000 personnel. You can't win no matter how hard you try.

But it's a country even farther than the Cretian Peninsula so there probably won't be any chances that we'll be affected. Keep calm, keep calm.

"But it's amazing, yes? How did you win against a 300,000-strong great army?" (Almis)

"Hahaha, We Cretians have the God of War on our side after all!" (Ains)

Ains' mood got better as he told more stories about the Cretian-Persis Wars. He's completely drunk. He kept on drinking until he passed out at the banquet.

"Ugh... my head..." (Ains)

“Are you all right? Shall I bring you water?” (Almis)

“Please... Hahhah, I apologize. I’ve drunk too much...” (Ains)

Ains smiles bitterly.

“Then, about the spirits...” (Ains)

“I can’t guarantee a lot of them but I can probably have you sell just a few.” (Almis)

For the meantime, we are discussing about the price and the transaction volume. With this, the amount of ways I can secure foreign goods have increased by one.

“Then let’s move on, what were the goods that you would like to request?” (Ains)

“Horses. I want about 300 of them.” (Almis)

“300 horses, yes?... That would be... no... I would be able to prepare them. It’s just...”

Ains seems to hesitate.

“300 horses would be about 1200 gold coins. Would you be able to prepare such a big amount of money? Plus, if you consider the maintenance costs...” (Ains)

If you think about it a gold coin will intuitively be worth around a 1,000,000 yen. Therefore, that would be around 1,200,000,000 yen worth of goods from a Japanese person’s perspective.

Naturally, you won’t be able to prepare this amount of money with just the income of the Ars Territory. The pasture is full of clovers so I don’t think it’s going to be a problem.

“Sir Ains, I know I was just the chief of a small village not too long ago. However, what am I right now?” (Almis)

“...You are now the lord of a big clan contesting the first or second place in the Rosyth Kingdom.” (Ains)

That’s right.

Success like mine doesn't come as fast like mine even at a global scale.

"At present, my territory is in the process of promoting a system of mass producing paper. Soon, we'll be able to produce immense quantities of paper." (Almis)

"...What are you trying to say?" (Ains)

"I would like to know if we could pay by loan payments, as opposed to lump-sum."

Ains crosses his arms, seemingly troubled as he heard my question.

"150 gold coins per year. If you pay me that for 25 years then I will accept." (Ains)

That would be about 2550 gold in interest, huh... That's about twice the principal loan.

That's stupid.

You might say, but I really need the horses as soon as possible. There's no other way.

"Do you have a place to keep them?" (Ains)

"Yes, somewhat." (Almis)

From the start, the Norfolk Four Course System won't work without the animals.

"By the way, what would you be using them for?" (Ains)

"Plowing farm lands, transporting luggage, organizing the knights... A lot of things." (Almis)

I'm thinking of adopting a system of loaning horses to the farmers. Of course, it'll cost everytime I lend one. You could say that it'll be a kind of tax.

Generally, I'll trouble the farmers around the palace. In exchange, I'll give them preferential right to utilize the horses.

Furthermore, when the horse gives birth, the first foal would have to be returned to the Ars Clan while they could keep the succeeding foals.

The baby horses the Ars Clan received will then be looked after until they grow to a

certain extent after which they'll be entrusted to another farmer.

It's a plan to slowly introduce the Norfolk Four Course system as well as propagate horses. Just like that, they'll probably grow several times.

Naturally, you can also gather up and use them as cavalry or cart horses in emergencies.

"Would you also need caretaker slaves? I'll sell them for cheap, if you buy them together." (Ains)

"No, I'll make do with Lia." (Almis)

Come to think of it, Lia has already served her purpose. Soyon has mastered how to raise up horses after all. There should be no problems if I make that girl oversee the horse rearing. That's why I don't need slaves anymore.

Lia ended up taking care of Roswald after she completed her job and got freed from slavery. She's completely become a housewife. A child would come sometime soon too.

"But since I want to form a cavalry corps... I want people who can ride horses. Doesn't matter if they're mercenaries or battle slaves. I need about 50." (Almis)

At present, there are only thirty people who can decently ride horses. Plus there won't be problems with assembling about 20 promising and experienced people in Bolus' group.

If I need to make about 100 cavalry then I'll need 50 more. I need to compensate for the difference somehow.

"Hmmm, Mercenaries are rigid, yes? I can introduce you to some, but I don't know if they would be willing to go to the Adernia Peninsula... As expected, battle slaves would be preferable. Actually, we had a skirmish against the Germanis people a month ago and some slaves who could ride horses got listed in the market." (Ains)

"Then I'll be taking battle slaves, yes?"

Battle slaves are easy to manage.

It's pricy in itself, but once you buy them, you won't have to pay them any more wages.

“Understood. Then it would be 50 battle slaves... It would be 75 gold coins. Shall I add them to the 25-year contract?” (Ains)

“No, I’ll pay for them lump-sum.” (Almis)

Adding 75 gold coins to the loan contract would be somewhat...

“Then I’ll be excusing myself.” (Ains)

Ains lowers his head then exits the room.

As he leaves, he turns his back and says:

“Should you need weapons, please don’t hesitate to call for me immediately.”

Always the businessman, huh.

CHAPTER 45

THE BANQUET

Bartolo's child has been born.

The news is spread to the Rosyth Kingdom's various clans.

"Ou! Sir Almis, Madame Tetra, thank you very much for coming!" (Bartolo)

"Yes, Congratulations on this day. Please accept these liquor as gift." (Almis)

I point to three barrels of liquor stacked on the horse cart.

I then order Ron and Roswald, who I took as escorts, to assist in unloading the liquor.

"Oh! Liquor, huh? I look forward to drinking them, I really love liquor, you know."
(Bartolo)

"They're quite strong so please try not to drink too much." (Almis)

I warn him in advance. You'll have a very painful experience if you drink it the same as you would normally drink wine.

"Honey! How about holding back on the liquor at least for today?"

A woman calls out to Bartolo. She's holding a small baby in her arms. She's likely Bartolo's wife.

"What are you saying? It's a special day today that's why we're drinking!" (Bartolo)

The two begin quarreling.

That being said, Bartolo's wife is quite young, huh. You can even say that she's still a little girl.

She's unexpectedly younger than Tetra, you know. If I recall correctly, Bartolo's in his early 30's. This Lolicon!

“You must be Sir Almis, am I correct? Thank you for always taking care of my husband.”
(Bartolo’s Wife)

“Please, the feeling is mutual. Sir Bartolo has always been taking care of me.” (Almis)

If you think about it clearly, he hasn’t really helped me that much, but I’m the type who believes some things are better left unsaid.

“Is this the new born child?” Tetra asks about the baby Bartolo’s wife is holding.

“Yes, that’s right. Would you like to hold the baby? She’s a girl.” (Bartolo’s Wife)

Tetra holds the baby as if it’s a highly precious but fragile item. She returns the baby to the mother after getting satisfied holding her for a while.

“Then let us speak again later. Please enjoy yourself with the food and drinks.” Bartolo speaks then heads for another clan’s group.

“Hey, Almis. It should be a boy for the first after all, huh.” (Tetra)

“I don’t mind either way. It’s not like a girl couldn’t succeed as the family head, right?”
(Almis)

The Adernia Peninsula observes agnatic succession. But for me, that should just be nothing but an old tradition. In this world, women’s status is not that low probably because only they could become sorcerers.

It’s just something persistently difficult.

At most, enatic succession would seem to cause various problems should there be a big succession crisis in the Rosyth Kingdom.

“But if we have a boy then we won’t have that much problems occurring... wouldn’t that be better?” (Tetra)

“Well, I don’t like troublesome things too so... I guess we’ll have a boy first and then a girl?” (Almis)

I don't want to be biased towards either of them. Like just boys, or just girls...

Come to think of it, when you speak of a baby's gender, it's more likely to be a boy, huh?

That should be good for now.

It's not like Tetra's showing signs of being pregnant now.

"First is the banquet, huh." (Almis)

"Do you know today's objectives?" (Tetra)

"I know, I know. We should get as much people friendly as possible. Am I right? I've remembered the names of the people who made a good impression to me at our wedding, after all. I should be fine." (Almis)

By the way, almost all of them were in the Anti-DeBell Pro-King Rosyth Faction. It would seem that no matter what I'd become hostile with the DeBell Clan.

Disputes are troublesome, huh.

"Let's go with limiting hostilities with Regal DeBell as much as possible. He's a neighbor, after all." (Almis)

"That's fine. We don't have any particular reason to fight here after all." (Tetra)

Okay, for the meantime...

"How about we eat and drink?" (Almis)

The banquet begins. If I were to mention one impression...

They really don't have manners, huh?

These 'gentlemen,' with the high status of being powerful clansmen, are chugging

down liquor. They wipe their hands on their clothes, clamor with loud voices, and speak with food in their mouths.

Well, to be fair they don't have cutlery like spoon and fork so you can say grabbing food by hand is the natural thing to do in this world.

"The same can't be said for wiping your hands with your clothes though."

"Well, Let's wipe our hands with our handkerchiefs."

We brought quite a lot of handkerchiefs. But in the end, it's quite inconvenient without tableware, huh. I wonder if I could somehow make them popular?

"Leader, I think you're taking it too seriously." (Roswald)

"Yes. Yes." (Almis)

Roswald is... Well... if he doesn't mind, then it's fine. It seems to be the same for the others anyway.

"Sir Almus!! Won't you please tell me the story of your victory over King Ferrum?" (Random Noble)

"Sure, I don't mind." (Almis)

This is actually the fifth time I've been asked. It seems each of the powerful clans of the Rosyth Kingdom were each quite severely harmed by King Ferrum that they wanted to hear about his death and defeat.

It's not like I don't want to tell the story but I've been telling the same story for who knows how many times already that I've lost interest.

By the way, you can also call this as a deepening of friendships, right?

But there's just one problem.

"Sir Almis. Actually, our daughter wants to know about your tales. Would you please let her hear it from you?" (Random Noble)

"Sir Almis!!!" (Another Random Noble)

Somehow, it would seem my popular period has come.

I can only think of three reasons.

First, I don't have any other wife than Tetra.

Second, Tetra still hasn't given birth to a male heir.

And Third, I don't have any other relative.

That's why they'll get huge returns should they become relatives with me. It's become particularly worse with those who failed on currying favor with the DeBell clan.

I'm fine telling them the story but...

Marriage is...

I just got married to Tetra so there's no way I can look for a second wife immediately. Withdrawal is out of the question.

In the end, those trying to curry favor with me are those with little leeway from the very beginning so they don't have considerable power.

Well, Tetra would just scowl at a young woman who gets too close and make her go away anyway.

"Be a bit more amiable for me." (Almis)

"I don't have any particular problem. It's just that you should just chase away all those little clanswomen. Besides, I'm not that against you marrying a second wife. It's just that you might as well marry from a powerful clan if you're going to marry again anyway." (Tetra)

It's fine for me to take a second wife, huh...

Frank as usual, this girl.

Personally speaking, I'd be happier if you showed even just a bit of jealousy.

Suddenly, the surroundings become a little busy.

“N? What’s happening?” (Almis)

“Ah... It seems Sir Regal DeBell has come.” (Tetra)

The people snuggling up to me blantly lost their excitement. Do you really hate him that much?

Regal DeBell comes toward us, pushing away the crowd on his way. He’s muscular and a size taller than me. He’s in his late thirties. He came accompanied by an endless stream of people behind him. They’re probably the clansmen under his influence.

“Sir Almis Ars, it has been a while. We met last time at your wedding. And Madame Tetra is beautiful as usual.” (Regal)

“Yes. Sir Regal. I’m happy to see you in good health.” (Almis)

Everyone gazes gather towards the me and Regal.

“Likewise, Let us support this country together.” (Regal)

“Yes, I’ll be counting on you in emergencies.” (Almis)

Regal DeBell holds out his hand for a handshake and I oblige.

He leaves just like that after the handshake. It was good that he didn’t mention anything about the crystal ornament.

“It’s really unpleasant seeing him take along those followers like that...” (Rosalind)

“Ahaha” (Almis) I laugh it off.

“Hey, Leader. Have you noticed they’re giving off bloodlust against us?” (Rosalind)

“Of course, I know that much. I also noticed how you made them lose their nerves when you countered with your own.” (Almis)

“That’s because they were looking at older brother badly...” (Ron)

Nevertheless, I don’t want you to compete. Disputes are troublesome. If possible, I want amicable relations.

The hall begins to stir anew as I lectured Ron and Roswald.

“It’s the Rosyth Royal Family, huh...”

King Rosyth’s relatives headed by Julia has come. They’re here even though Bartolo is not from one of the great clans. Well, this much is natural because of Bartolo’s achievements.

Julia greets Bartolo first.

Bartolo manages to scrape a proper response even though he’s gotten dead drunk from brandy. This guy, he can do it if he tries, huh.

Julia walks straight towards me as soon as their conversation ended.

“Good evening, Sir Almis.” (Julia)

“Yes, good evening Princess Julia.” (Julia)

As I greet her, she extends her hand for a handshake so I oblige.

“Please take care of me from here on out, yes?” (Julia)

Julia leaves and then heads to Regal DeBell’s group.

“Yes”

She sneaks a letter on my hand.

“Hey, Isn’t Regal-san somehow glaring at me? I think he found out about the crystal ornament you disassembled...” (Almis)

Tetra shakes her head to disagree.

“You’re wrong. He’s angry because Julia greeted you before him.” (Tetra)

I see.

It’s natural to greet Bartolo first because he’s the host, but next greeting... Is that even important?

“Hello. Is it fine for me to call you Sir Almis?” A male with large build greets me.

Uhm... This person is...

“Raymond Rosyth. He’s Julia’s uncle.” Tetra whispers to let me know.

Ah right, He’s Raymond-san. I remember. He was there at the wedding.

“Yes, that is fine. It’s been a while.” (Almis)

We shake hands for the mean time. He smiles with a grin.

Alright, he seems to not have noticed that I forgot his name. Safe!

“Can we have a little talk over there?” (Raymond)

“Yes, I don’t mind.” (Almis)

The two of us move away a little from the banquet hall.

“This liquor is quite strong yes? I won’t be satisfied with normal liquor anymore... so if possible, could you sell me some?” (Raymond)

“Yes, no problem. Can you please pay by salt, wheat, or Cretian currency?” (Almis)

“Yes, I understand. My territory has quite a big salt mine from which you can get high quality salt...” (Raymond)

We begin to chat, specifically regarding our territories’ respective specialty products and judicial correspondence. While I’m grateful for the thought, did he call me out here just for this kind of talk?

As I thought that, Raymond-san suddenly begins to talk.

“Sir Almis. I’m sure you know that King Rosyth has very little time left to live, yes?” (Raymond)

“Yes, I heard it was due to illness but...” (Almis)

Honestly, I don’t think that racoon would kick the bucket.

“He would live for three years more, at most. Perhaps, he might even meet his demise by the end of this year.” Raymond drinks some liquor as he declared.

What should I do if you tell me that...

“What do you think the next king should do?” (Raymond)

“I’ve been thinking... Normally, wouldn’t it be fine for you to succeed as king? I don’t understand why we expressly need to find a groom for Julia and make him king.” (Almis)

Rather than Julia’s groom, wouldn’t it be more natural for the King’s younger brother to become king?

“That is often argued. However, it is feared that hostilities would spring forth with that system as all royalty could then claim a right to succeed the throne. King Rosyth has

three other brothers apart from me after all. If you include me, then we'll have four contenders to the throne. If I become king, the other three would surely voice out their dissatisfaction. You would hate being detested and doubted by family, right? The most amicable settlement we had established would be for Julia to receive a groom. That way, everyone would have no complaints." (Raymond)

Certainly, if you set the precedent that a sibling could inherit then the others would certainly want in. Royalty also have their problems, huh.

"Then, who do you think would be a suitable groom?" (Raymond)

"...Normally, wouldn't Regal DeBell be suitable? He heads the strongest clan now right?" (Almis)

Raymond shrugs as he heard my answer.

"Certainly, in terms of strength, Regal DeBell should be ahead. However, I heard his territory suffers from horrible mismanagement. It seems his citizens have even resorted to flee to other territories. He also got severely beaten countless times in battle against King Ferrum. But most importantly..." (Raymond)

Raymond looks straight at me.

"That person has only one wife right now even though he had married up to three women. He said they died in accidents but... I wonder about that. Furthermore, I hear that he commits violence against good-looking women within his territory. How could I entrust my beloved niece to that kind of man?" (Raymond)

Raymond continued to drink more liquor. I couldn't answer anything back.

He fixes his gaze at me a second time after he emptied his cup.

"What's troublesome are Regal DeBell's followers, vassals, and relatives. They are people with good lineage after all. There's a possibility they would begin to disrespect our royal family should Regal become king."

Raymond declares as he leaves while tapping my shoulder.

"Is there someone... who holds a territory that can oppose Regal DeBell, who has the ability upon which a country could rely, who is kind and gentle that I could entrust

Princess Julia to him, and who has few relatives and would not make light of and disrespect our royal family? If you can find someone like that, then please tell me about him.” (Raymond)

CHAPTER 46

HUMAN RESOURCES

“Uhhh... *ehem*, *ehem*. We are currently recruiting for the military!”

Roswald announces as he gathers the villagers. The villagers look at each other.

“They’re taking in soldiers?” (In a conscription context)

“As expected, this lord also...”

“Well, this isn’t a place without conscription after all...”

“Please don’t let me be picked...”

The villagers rustle into commotion.

Roswald dispels it by coughing loudly.

“This is military recruitment. We will not be taking soldiers compulsorily. I will now state the terms! Lia, please give me the paper.” (Roswald)

Roswald reads the recruitment terms.

“Let’s see... We are looking for male recruits, aged 15 to 40. The salary would be paid in wheat. Bring your own weapons. Prospective candidates without weapons can still apply as you will be lent weapons by the Ars Clan. Should you be commissioned, you will be required to reside in the vicinity of the palace. Every day you will be subjected to training. You will also be assigned to rotational border protection duties. Should you be commissioned, you will not be subjected to dismissal except in cases of traumatic amputation or illness. Furthermore, in case that it has become necessary for you to retire due to old age, injury, or illness you will be provided with severance pay. Applicants must state their intent to the village chief within two weeks. We are looking to fill 530 slots. Should the applicants exceed that number, then we will conduct examinations. That is all!”

The villagers rustle again into commotion as soon as they heard Roswald's words.

"This means it's not compulsory!?"

"Yahoo!!"

"Hmmm, what should I do. They'll pay me a salary so should I try joining?"

"It's bothersome to do farming after all... but they'll need you to change residence..."

"I'm scared to die so..."

Roswald coughs loudly again.

Thus, the villagers' fixed their attention at him once more.

"We have another announcement different from the military recruitment!"

Roswald receives another paper from Lia. He reads the announcement loudly.

"Should there be orphans in the village... children without parents aged 15 below... they are hereby required to be brought to the palace!" (Roswald)

"Uhm... why would that be?" (Random villager)

"I also don't know (In other words, it's not something you need to know!)" (Roswald)

"...The official stance and the real motive might get reversed you know?" (Lia)

Roswald closes his mouth in confusion as he heard Lia say that. He then glares at the villagers.

"In any case!!! It's ordered by the lord after all!!" (Roswald)

Roswald disperses the crowd as if to evade the topic.



At a certain mountain somewhere in the Ars Territory... A certain beast exists.

It has skin that can't be pierced by normal arrows.

It has fangs and nails as sharp as razor.

It has a sense of smell superior to that of a dog.

Furthermore, it has strength that can beat down even a tree.

This beast... is the brown bear, currently busy looking for honey.

No matter how determined the honey bees sting the bear with their stingers, the bear remains unaffected.

The bear finishes eating the honey. It raises its head to return to its nest.

At that moment, an arrow pierces its face. It strikes the eye, penetrating its head. It falls as it releases a deafening sound.



"We cannot thank you enough, Sir Gram." (Random village chief)

"Please. I'm just doing my duty. A bear that has tasted human flesh is dangerous after all and needs to be killed."

Gram answers with a grin.

He passed by the village in order to proclaim the recruitment and orphan orders. Upon arriving, he learned about the bear and was requested to eliminate it.

Since he was on duty, he immediately went back to eliminate the bear after receiving permission from Almis.

“As for the rewards...” (chief)

“Ah, just give me the bear’s pelt. Please keep everything else.” (Gram)

The villagers let out voices of surprise as they heard Gram’s reply.

From the very beginning, the bear and its pelt were Gram’s since it was him who killed it. Taking it for himself was only natural. Furthermore, rewards in the form of grain, liquor, or women are usually demanded.

“Is that so?... By the way Sir Gram, how many servants do you have in your estate?” (chief)

“Huh? No... I don’t have any...” (Gram)

Gram bewilderedly replies. The village chief laughs with a broad grin.

“Then by all means, won’t you please receive my fourth daughter as your humble servant?” (chief)

“Huh? Ummm...” (Gram)

Lulu cuts in the conversation as Gram was troubled how to reply.

“No, thank you.” (Lulu)

“Eh? Ah, no... I was asking Sir Gram but...”

“Hah?”

“Ah, no. I didn’t say anything!” (chief)

The village chief retreats from Lulu’s vigor.

Using that opportunity, Lulu pulls on Gram’s ear and drags him away from the village.

“Understand? It’s the chief’s plan to make his daughter close to you under the guise of a servant in order to have you get her pregnant when given the chance! Don’t ever fall

for it!" (Lulu)

"But... I kind of think it's about time I get a servant... look, I just received recently..." (Gram)

"Then I'll live with you and do the household chores for you. We sorcerers are free in peaceful times after all! Isn't it fine this way?" (Lulu)

"Eh!... But..." (Gram)

As Gram hesitates, Lulu glares angrily at him.

"You have a problem with that?" (Lulu)

"No, Ma'm!" (Gram)

While this exchange was happening, about 10 kids ran towards Gram and Lulu.

"Uhm, Excuse us! Please, we also want to become soldiers!" (Kid)

"I'm sorry, but no matter how you look at it, you guys are less than 15 years old." (Gram)

Gram smiles bitterly. No matter how you look at it, everyone here are below 15 years old. Furthermore, there are even girls.

"But!..." (Kid)

"Right now, all you can do is eat properly so you can become big and strong. Once you turn 15, by all means, come and join us." (Gram)

Gram strokes the children's heads as he declares.

He then mutters as he looks at the children taking their leave.

"If children like that increased and our army becomes larger in size, then Almis-san

too can succeed further.” (Gram)

“Yes. But the sorcerers, not just the army, are important too, okay?” (Lulu)

The two looks at each other and laughs.



The orphans are gathered before me. No, I had them gathered before me. Everyone is looking uneasy.

Now then...

I look at them and raise my voice.

“I have two choices for everyone gathered here. First, you can come live here in this mansion. Here you will study martial arts, arithmetic, and the Cretian Language. In the future, we will have you work as knights. The other, you can come back home to your villages. We won’t mind whichever you choose. We will not criticize you.” (Almis)

I dispatched tax collectors throughout my territory to collect the taxes. I also have them organize various official documents. In other words, petty bureaucracy.

However, you always need excellent people for the bureaucracy. It might be alright for now, but after several years, Ron and the guys would become weak old grandpa’s and grandma’s and then tax collection would be out of the question.

You always need new talented people.

The problem is how to gather them. To start with, the first method is to hold examinations then gather up the excellent.

But this method is rejected on the spot. Why? Because the only people who could take exams are those who could read and write. Problem is, there are no such people.

The second method, is to gather children who want to learn. I was deeply troubled with this. But I ended up rejecting it anyway.

In the first place, few parents understand the value of scholarship so I won’t be able to gather the children. I can only gather those who understand scholarship to some

extent, and those who can manage to lose some labor... In other words, only the sons and daughters of village chiefs.

The natural enemy of the village chief is the tax collector. What kind of village chief would send his sons and daughters to become his own tax collector enemy?

And from there, I thought about gathering orphans and making them into bureaucrats. You would be able to save orphans while gathering personnel at the same time. It's an operation hitting two birds with one stone.

Nevertheless, there are also dirty little reasons for this.

First, there's no risk of external influences since they don't have family anymore. Second, there is little risk they would betray me, the person who would raise them, the person who they embrace with gratitude.

Although they don't have any proof of superior ability... It's not like I'm making them do work the same level as what the modern era's Japanese bureaucrats would do.

So long as they could read and write Cretian as well as do arithmetic then they're good enough.

If I narrow the subjects down to only these two, then the children should be able to master them by the time they turn 15.

"How about it?" (Almis)

I ask them once more.

"Those who want to return to their hometowns, raise your hands. I will respect your decision." (Almis)

Hands are raised, scattered among the children.

About a third of the children raised their hands. A lot less than I expected.

Well, even if they came back at their villages, they would be nothing but dependents. If you stayed, you are assured of a great social status. So I guess it's hardly surprising

that a lot of children chose to stay here.



“Then can I leave them under the care of Lulu and Soyon? Although me and Tetra will also look after them from time to time. Is that okay? (Almis)

“That’s okay, you know!”

“Well, if it’s just housework in our sparetime.”

They’ve accepted.

There are also reasons why the two girls were chosen as the children’s attendants. First, the girls’ ability to help people. Second, they are sorcerers so they’re basically free in times of peace. Furthermore, the two are not officially tax collectors. Though they do help once in a while, their main occupation is sorcerer.

If bureaucrat training is done by bureaucrats, then that would be a problem. Once they develop a teacher-student relationship, covering up for the mistakes of the superior or of the subordinate tend to happen. This is a big problem for an organization.

Therefore, I chose the two who are sorcerers and not official bureaucrats.

I’ve also become a rotten being.

Alright, now that the matter is taken care of, I need to entertain a guest.

“Good day, Lord Almis Ars. My name is Ismere.”

“I am Yang Qingming.”

The man-woman pair bow their heads and greet me.

The woman calling herself Ismere is without doubt a Cretian. But this man named Yang Qingming, what could be his nationality? Though the name sounds Asian...

Yang Qingming laughs and answers as he understood the strange face I made.

“I come from the far-east, from the Scarlet Empire which everyone calls the Silk Kingdom. Yang is my last name while Qingming is my first name.” (Qingming)

Silk Kingdom... Never heard of it huh.

Am I just a country bumpkin?

“If I’m not mistaken, you want employment. Is that what you wished?” (Almis)

The two bow deeply as I asked.

“I went on a journey aiming for the farthest sea and... I accomplished that goal just a month ago. Thus, I thought I should make my writings into a book. I got to know about the thing called paper that would make that possible. I possess the Divine Protection of Language so I can speak any language. I’m also proud of my skill at mathematics. I guarantee I’ll be of much use.” (Qingming)

“I see. In exchange for working for me, you want paper. You’ll also want necessities until you finish your writing your book. Is that correct?”

Qingming grins as he bows.

“That is correct. As expected of the hero rumored to be raised by Griffon-sama.” (Qingming)

Hey, don’t believe those rumors.

Right now, they’re being rapidly and ridiculously embellished! To the level of breathing fire while flying and growing dorsal fins on the back!

“And then you?” (Almis)

Ismere hands me a parchment as she explains her expertise.

“I am an architect. I can plan and invent several defensive devices and facilities. I can also plan comfortable residences.” (Ismere)

In that parchment, she drew plans of various structures as well as their finished illustrations.

Hmm, this is good, huh.

Our fort at the De Morgal Kingdom border is made of wood. I think it's quite undependable.

However...

"We only match a little in technological strength so why have you come to me? There are other places more fitting, like King Rosyth or King De Morgal."

Of all places, would you normally have come to mine?

"No, I thought that the you, the hero who is son of the great Griffon, would be able to master my architecture." (Ismere)

"You're lying." (Almis)

Ismere begins to shake in fear, surprised by my assertion.

"See, as I thought, it's better to tell him the truth." (Qingming)

As she hears this, Ismere begins to tell the truth with teary eyes.

"Actually..."

If I were to summarize what she said...

It seems she was rejected by all the others besides me.

She got rejected because she's a woman. They also have enough architects. Furthermore, they couldn't understand what she was saying in the Cretian language.

Well, surely there already are architects in the courts of prominent kings. Furthermore, they're Adernian.

It's not like I don't understand the kings of each kingdom who think they don't understand the necessity of intentionally hiring a woman, especially a woman who couldn't understand them.

Though it was unexpected that King Rosyth would reject her. I thought that if it was King Rosyth, then he'd happily welcome her since he's able to speak Cretian after all.

When I asked about that...

"I was told by King Rosyth that it would be better if I went to you..." (Ismere)

What curious turn of events is that? I don't understand.

However...

"Then that would be fine. I understand. I'll hire you." (Almis)

"Really!?" (Ismere)

"Yes. We'll negotiate about the salary later. Also give me designs that correspond to reality, okay?"

Ismere bows deeply as I declared so.

CHAPTER 47

SOLDIERS

“Hmmm... We gathered more troops than expected huh?” (Almis)

I’m looking at the troops that responded to our recruitment.

We’re in the middle of examinations. We gathered 700 people for just 530 slots.

I’m honestly surprised.

I thought they’d be put off by war since they’ve been subjected to it for how many years by King Ferrum.

It appears that thought is wrong.

There seems to be certain patterns prevalent here.

First, those men subjected to long conscriptions and made to become completely accustomed to army life. Then their lord, King Ferrum dies. They are told to come back to their homes only to find out their fields have already been seized by someone else. As they rush to figure out what to do, this recruitment announcement falls into their laps.

Second, those who think “I really can’t stand farming! If they’ll pay me then I’ll just go join the army!!”

Third, “I’ll become successful and be distinguished!”

I honestly thought of slashing the number of slots so this was unexpected, but if you think about it clearly then it might have become like this.

In the Adernia Peninsula, war is a familiar existence not unlike a storm.

It seems the competition is also fierce in the exams.

People who originally came from the army wanted this.

They seem to be familiar with things like military formations so the successful should end up being selected purely by physical strength and age.

My planned composition for the Ars Army is a mixture of 500 hoplites, 200 bowmen, and 100 cavalry.

I've already secured the required cavalry, so the remaining would be the hoplites and the bowmen.

Having said that, I should leave the examinations to Bolus, Ron, and Gram.

"Hey, Leader. Do we have room to hire 800 soldiers? I heard King Ferrum had heavily taxed up until recently. Furthermore, we would not draft but hire, yes? Would our finances be fine?" (Ron)

"I'm hesitating to say we have leeway, but it's not like we're in distress tax-wise." (Almis)

"Why?" (Ron)

Well, it's bothering you, huh.

Then Tetra, please explain.

"Understood. Ron, do you know the reason why King Ferrum had a hard time??" (Tetra)

"Uhm, is it because the Ars Territory was poor? But that doesn't change with the leader, right?... I don't understand." (Ron)

“First, subsidiary aid. There are lords in the Rosyth Kingdom that does not border any foreign country. They don’t need to maintain soldiers. In exchange, they have a duty to pay the Rosyth Kingdom a certain amount of wheat. That wheat would be fairly divided to the clans with external borders. That’s why they are not as distressed as King Ferrum.” (Tetra) *(TL Note: King Ferrum lost this privilege when he broke away, but Almis and co regained this as a restored border territory.)*

“I see... But I still think 800 people be too much.” (Ron)

Tetra then shows Ron some paper.

We’ve already adopted a system of mass producing paper. It’s a system where not only widows, but also specialists and farmers who want extra income participate.

“The second is this. Paper accounts for 60% of the Ars Territory’s income. We sell them to Cretian merchants. We have them pay us with Cretian metalwork, Persis glassware, or oriental spices in corresponding value. We then sell these goods to Adernian merchants and the kingdom’s various clans who we have pay in wheat or salt. With this system, our territory can pay for 800 men’s wages.” (Tetra)

“I see.” (Ron)

Somehow, Ron has come to understand.

By the way, we certainly also have various clansmen of the De Morgal Kingdom as our clients. Although we couldn’t identify them as such because they don’t come in person.

Well, even if they’re an enemy, they’re a customer so long as they pay. Those high-class goods won’t become military power anyway so its fine to sell as many of them as possible. It’s something like snatch away and exhaust the other party’s wheat by selling.

If I may also add one reason, unlike King Ferrum, we managed to get rid of embezzlement by the village chiefs. Although it’s a little insignificant.

Well then, let’s go to Roswald now that Ron seems to have understood. It’s the real issue at hand for today.



“Roswald” (Almis)

“Yes, what is it?” (Roswald)

“Actually, the 100 horses and 50 battle slaves we ordered from Ains are scheduled to come today.” (Almis)

As expected, even Ains had difficulty suddenly procuring that many horses. Although I’m surprised that he still managed to prepare them in such a short time.

“And?” (Roswald)

“I want to entrust to you the command of the cavalry. In other words, I want you to be in charge of the 50 battle slaves.” (Almis)

“Why me? I think Bolus-san has more experience than me, right?” (Roswald)

I answer his question.

“First, Bolus has no experience commanding cavalry so the two of you are equal in that regard. Second, you are the most skillful horse rider, as far as I know. Furthermore, you and Lia close, am I right?”

Roswald blushes as I say so.

“That’s why I think you’d be well-received by the Germanis slaves. Since it’s become this way, it will be wonderful if the you and Lia got married too! Being able to speak a little Germanis is also a big point.” (Almis)

I’ve returned the Divine Protection of Language after all. I’ll have to rely on Lia and Roswald for communicating with them.

“I understand. I’ll do my best!”

Roswald greatly nods in agreement.



A few hours after, Ains brought over the slaves and horses.

“Please confirm the goods. These are the 100 horses.” (Ains)

“Thank you very much. Can I ask one question? How did you manage this in such a short time?” (Almis)

“I had 30 horse at inventory from the very beginning. Furthermore, other Cretian merchants had recently brought in some horses. I managed to get about 50 from them. I obtained the remaining 20 little by little buying from the small nomadic tribes within the Adernia Peninsula.”

Oh, really?... That’s unexpected.

Nevertheless... I see. It’s natural that there would be people relying on nomadism as their livelihood, huh.

I need to make contact with them as soon as possible so we can try procuring some from them. If I got all my horses from Ains then my expenses would pile up.

“Then, these are the battle slaves. As much as possible, I chose the slaves with good quality.” (Ains)

Ains tone has completely turned into sell-mode. Actually, it’s probably that kind of sensation.

I look at the slaves before me.

The first thing that catches the eye is their height. They’re quite taller than the average Adernian.”

Although a lot of them are black or brown haired, there are some who are blond-haired and blue-eyed.

I face the slaves and say:

“I am Almis. I am your master. Best Regards.” (Almis)

Lia translates it into Germanis.

A slave faces me and says something.

“For the meantime, we’re hungry so please give us something to eat... is what he said.” Lia looks up at me and translates with anxiety. She’s probably wondering whether it’s fine to translate what he just said.

I look at the slaves.

The slave who said that was a blond Germanis who’s probably in the second half of his thirties. There are scars here and there in his muscular body. What stands out the most is the scar around his ears that extend up to around his cheek.

He grins as he looks at me.

That being said, it’s not like every one of them has an arrogant attitude like this slave.

Rather, a lot of them glare at the blond slave with a “what the hell are you saying” expression.

“Tell them the following: Alright. We will prepare a meal for them. We will also specially heat up baths for you so clean yourselves.” (Almis)

I tell Lia who translates to the slaves.

The blond slave widens his eyes.



After the meal, Roswald declares the following to the slaves who now had changed into tidy clothes.

“I am Roswald. I am entrusted by the lord to manage you lot. Your job is to fight as cavalry. Should you render meritorious service, we will emancipate you from slavery. We will also grant you allowance.” (Roswald)

Roswald said that in Germanis even if stutteringly.

He spoke in Germanis even though he pronounced ridiculously and had help from Lia. That shocked the Germanis slaves. Normally, there's no master who would bother to speak in the language of the slave after all.

"Is that true? Isn't there a lot of problems with emancipating slaves should they work properly? This is certainly a lie." The blond slave declares while laughing frivolously.

"What's your name?" Roswald asks even though slightly offended.

"Virgar, mein Herr (*TL Note: He said master but he's trying to be sarcastic here so I wrote it in German*) Asking the name of a thing is eccentric, yes?" (Virgar)

He again laughs frivolously.

"What can we do to make you believe?" (Roswald)

"Hmmm... Let's see. Why don't you show us a real emancipated slave?" (Virgar)

"I'm one, you know." (Lia)

Virgar falls silent as he hears Lia's words. He had thought Lia was a slave translator.

Now that you mention it, for a slave, she's wearing clean clothes. She also doesn't have a choker. It's obvious that she's an emancipated slave.

Furthermore, she was emancipated mainly by Almus' meddling to support Roswald's romance and not just by meritorious service. But don't mind the small details.

"Then, have you decided to obey now?" (Roswald)

Virgar shakes his head to Roswald's question.

“I don’t like obeying someone weaker than me, you see. So please forgive me, okay?”
(Virgar)

“Then if we prove that I’m stronger than you, then you’ll obey me?” (Roswald)

Virgar grins as he hears Roswald’s words.

“Well, of course. Let’s have a joust, mein Herr. But there’s nothing in it for me if I win, right?... So free me if I win. Naturally, you accept right? Don’t tell me you’re afraid you’ll lose so you won’t accept?” (Virgar)

“No, that’s fine. If you win, you’ll be freed. In exchange, submit if you lose.” (Roswald)

With this, it’s been decided to hold a joust.



“Hey, Ains-san. I’ve been thinking. Are the Germanis people nomads?” (Almis)

I ask as I gaze at the two, Roswald and Blondie, preparing for battle. If that were so, I feel Roswald might not have a chance to win.**(TL Note: MC likes to refer to Virgis as blondie)*

“No, in the Germanis peoples, there are a lot who rely on agriculture and hunting as their livelihood. It’s just that their territory borders the nomads’ territory so a lot of them learn horse-riding techniques. Furthermore, although the Germanis area contains forests, they also have wide fields. They can bring up good horses.” (Ains)

I see. In other words, they are not natural-born cavalrymen.

Then, with this even Roswald has a fair chance to win.

“What is this?” (Virgis)

Virgis asks as he sees the stirrups installed in the horses.

Lia translates it without delay.

“It’s an equipment called stirrup. You hang your feet there so you can maintain your balance much easier. It’s not fair if only me gets to use one, right?” (Roswald)

Virgis laughs scornfully.

“Well thank you, mein Herr. But take it off for me. I can’t use an equipment I’m not used to.”

Lia translates it without delay.

Well, it’s not a bad judgement. While it’s true that you have more balance with the stirrup, it would be painful to look at when you screw up using equipment you’re not used to.

The two mount their horses and get in position. Both are wearing armor. It’s like a real battle.

However, it would be troublesome if someone dies so we have them use safer equipment – wooden poles with cloth wrapped several times on the tip. Well, someone could still die should they hit a bad spot.

The two horses start running when I clap as the starting command. The two poles intersect.

The battle is decided in one instant.

Roswald hits Virgis and makes him fall from his horse.

Well, you can say this is the natural outcome since Roswald used stirrups and can fight with a bear if given a spear.

Blondie looks up at Roswald with a vexed expression.

Roswald gets off from his horse and extends his hand to him.

“Here, get up.” (Roswald)

“...Thank you very much.” (Virgis)

Blondie accepts Roswald’s hand. Roswald asks Blondie with a proud expression.

“So, have you recognized me?”

“...I understand. I recognize you, master.” *(TL Note: He changes the way he says master.)*

Blondie answers as his face warps in frustration.

For the meantime, the matter’s resolved. Good. Good.

“By the way, stop it with the ‘master.’ Your master is that lord over there. I’m just... yes, I’m your captain.

“Understood, Captain. Please take care of me from now on.”

Blondie lowers his head to Roswald.

“Then you’ll be cleaning my house later.” (Roswald)

“Huh? Ah, no. I’m a battle slave, sir...” (Virgis)

“Didn’t you say you’ll submit to me? Men keep their word, right?” (Roswald)

Virgis lets out a deep sigh.

Now, with this we’ve finally managed to complete our cavalry.

CHAPTER 48

SECRET MEETING

“It’s been a while, Julia” (Almis)

“Yes, it’s been a while. Thank you for coming.” (Julia)

“You called me after all.” (Almis)

“At the lake, in the full moon” That was written in the letter Julia handed me in the banquet hall. I came here because of those words.

“I really thought that I wouldn’t be able to meet with Julia anymore. You called me something like Lord Almis before after all.” (Almis)

Julia laughs and counters.

“Didn’t you call me Princess Julia too?” (Julia)

...

“Can we talk for a little while?” (Julia)



“Hey... Do you remember the first time we met?” (Julia)

“Yes, I remember. You invited me with the butterfly to come out, right?” (Almis)

“Right right!” (Julia)

The two sit by the lake shore and enjoy themselves with reminiscence.

“There was also that time you saw me naked, huh?” (Julia)

“That feels like it just happened yesterday. If I recall, after that I met with King Rosyth, right?” (Almis)

“Whose was more beautiful, mine or Tetra’s?”

Julia smiles mischievously.

“Well... your breasts are bigger, you know.” (Almis)

Julia turns bright red and instinctively hides her chest.

“Jeez...” (Julia)

Julia tries to hide her elated smile by sounding angry.

“Hey... Almis...”

She fixes her gaze at me.

“I like you.”

“Yes, I know.”

There’s no way I wouldn’t have known.

“Do you like me?”

“Isn’t that obvious?”

As I say so, Julia presses her lips to mine.

Her tongue enters my mouth.

I pushed mine in hers as I receive her.

The two intertwined many times over.

“Nnn!”

I find Julia’s weak spot so I concentrate my caress there.

I forcibly suck on Julia’s tongue and gulp her saliva.

We separate as our breathing turned rough, our saliva forming a bridge between us.

“You’ve gotten so good at this, huh.” (Julia)

Julia catches her breath and connects her lips with mine for a second time.

I put my hands on Julia’s shoulders and push her down.

And then...



“That was close.” (Almis)

Just a little more and I would’ve broken my promise with King Rosyth.

“Jeez, you’re really hopeless... it hasn’t even been a year since you got married. To be thinking of cheating already.” (Julia)

“The one who almost made me cheat was you, you know.” (Almis)

We haven’t done anything except kiss so it should still be safe. Probably...

“Almis”

Julia looks at me with a serious expression.

She then kneels and bows her head deeply.

“I ask of you, please. Won’t you marry me?” (Julia)

“I can’t answer that.” (Almis)

“Why? Do you dislike me?”

“No. I like you very much. I like you as much as Tetra... More than that, I love you.”

What the hell am I saying even though I have a wife?

“Then why? Is it because you feel bad about Tetra?” (Julia)

“That too. But the biggest reason is different.” (Almis)

As she hears my answer, Julia’s tears start falling. She cries out:

“What? If you marry me then you’d be able to love me as you like, you know? I won’t lose to Tetra, too!! If you marry me, then you’ll inherit the Kingdom too!” (Julia)

“That’s the problem!!” (Almis)

I unintentionally raise my voice.

“Supposing... I do marry you, how many people do you think would acknowledge my succession to the throne? Only the royal family and the nominally anti-DeBell faction centered around Bartolo. Even they won't consider me as a beloved King. They only hate the DeBell clan, after all. Furthermore, do you think Regal DeBell would stay quiet and recognize me? There's no way that would happen. A civil war would break out, you know.” (Almis)

I was just forced into the fight with King Ferrum by necessity. I took the risk to eliminate King Ferrum because our lives were inevitably threatened. However, this civil war could be avoided if I just not marry Julia. It will force Julia into bitterness but nevertheless no one would certainly die.

If that war were to break out, I won't be an outsider. I would be at the center of it all. At that time, who would get hurt? Wouldn't it be Ron and the guys?

I can't let that sort of thing happen.

However...

“However, I will never hand you over to that Regal. That's why... could you please wait a little more for my reply?” (Almis)

In reality, I should have immediately refused. As a leader, as a lord...

However, I can't bring myself to do that...

Julia embraces me and says:

“I understand. I'll wait for five more months. Give me your conclusion until then. Otherwise...”

...

“I'll be made to marry Regal.”



“Hey, where have you been?” (Tetra)

“I met with Julia.” (Almis)

Tetra shows a slightly surprised expression as I answered.

“Isn't that something you hide?” (Tetra)

“I don’t have the confidence to hide it from you. You’re very smart after all.” (Almis)

You’d immediately find out anyway if I told a poor lie. It’s better if I just told you straight.

“You were asked to marry her?” (Tetra)

“You knew, huh.” (Almis)

“Woman’s intuition.” (Tetra)

Even though Tetra’s ‘woman’s intuition’ had a low success rate, she hit the mark this time, huh.

“Did you accept?” (Tetra)

“I’m still thinking about it. I got a five-month extension.” (Almis)

Really, what the hell am I consulting with my wife.

“You don’t have to mind me.” (Tetra)

“There’s no way I won’t, okay? If I were to marry Julia, then you would be treated as a concubine, you know.” (Almis)

Would Tetra be fine with that?

“It doesn’t mean that I won’t have complaints. But it’s not like I’m concerned with social status. So long as you let me stay as your wife...” (Tetra)

Tetra states with blushed cheeks.

“Besides, Julia is so pitiful now. If I were in Julia’s position, then I’d want to die... Although it’s not really a problem if it’s a complete stranger...” (Tetra)

Tetra pauses for a while.

“Julia is a friend. That’s why I’ll permit it. Well, if she apologizes to me sincerely first.” (Tetra)

Hmmm, I really don’t get women. *(TL Note: Tetra uses yurusu which could mean to permit or to forgive.)*

But is this something special for Tetra?

Isn’t that so.

“But that’s not the problem, right?” (Tetra)

“Right. It’s because there’s a possibility a war might break out...” (Almis)

There’s no way anyone could forgive Julia and me if the country splits into two causing unnecessary deaths just because of such a personal reason.

“For me, I think you should just do as you like. You’ve been working so hard for everyone after all. Isn’t it fine at this point?” (Tetra)

“Is that so... I’ll take that into consideration.”

It’s not good to leave my conclusion to others after all. I need to decide this on my own. It’s important after all.



“I see. He refused because of that reason, huh.” (Rosyth)

King Rosyth made a surprised expression as he heard Julia’s explanation.

“Did father thought that Almis would accept?” (Julia)

“No, I did expect him to decline. Just for a different reason. I thought he wouldn’t accept because he thought he still doesn’t have enough achievements.” (Rosyth)

Defeating King Ferrum was a great achievement.

However, it was offset by making him a great clansman.

By all rights, King Rosyth should have taken direct control of two-thirds of King Ferrum's territory and for Almis to be sealed at the remaining third. That reward should by all rights be sufficient. Almis, from the very beginning, was not a citizen of the Rosyth Kingdom, after all. Furthermore, he's just a little someone from a little village somewhere.

However, King Rosyth granted him all of King Ferrum's former territory. It's not an exaggeration to say that the reward was too much.

Because Almis was made a great clansman, not even one of his many achievements from before would stand. If he were to marry Julia in this situation, Almis will be seen as trying to cheat Julia. Well, it's not necessarily wrong regarding these things.

It's also doubtful if the Anti-DeBell faction would cooperate.

"Although I intended to forcibly make him take achievements by appointing him as supreme commander and making him attack a nearby country if war seems unlikely..."
(Rosyth)

They should be able to capture a sufficiently great achievement with Almis' subordinates' martial prowess, gunpowder, and Bartolo's assistance.

If it would seem he could not achieve a great achievement even with the tables set, then we would just end the matter with 'he was just a person of that level.'

"Is that so... even if Almis was determined, without achievements, then it wouldn't work, huh..." (Julia)

Julia drops her shoulders.

"Well... with just this much, we have no choice except pray. We can only leave it to fate."
(Rosyth)

"Fate, huh... Is see, that's how it is..." (Julia)



In a certain town around the DeBell-Ars border, a small dispute has occurred.

“Hey! The wheat is not enough!! What’s the meaning of this!!” A man shouts as he brandishes a sword.

That man is Gilberto.

He’s Regal DeBell’s second cousin.

The village chief is prostrating himself before Gilberto and pleads.

“I apologize deeply. The wheat is all but gone. Could you please wait until next year? Without fail, we will include this year’s part in next year’s tax payment.” (chief)

Gilberto kicks the village chief’s face flying.

“Don’t mess with me!! You lot haven’t even paid this year’s cloth yet!!”

Gilberto shouts.

He ignores the still village chief and makes the soldiers investigate the storehouse’s interior.

“There’s really nothing... nn?” (Gilberto)

Gilberto directs his sight to the ground. The soil’s color is a little strange.

He orders the soldiers as he notices the chief’s face change color.

“Dig here.” (Gilberto)

The soldiers dig on the surface. The ground turns unusually soft so they were able to dig easily.

There are countless vessels inside. They open the lid and find the wheat packed inside.

“You had them after all!!” (Gilberto)

“Th... these are seed rice!! If you take them then next year...” (chief)

Gilbert kicks the chief’s face again.

“No problem. We’ll lend you (real) seed rice. You can return them next year. Alright men! Take these away!” (Gilberto)

The soldiers take the wheat from the vessels away one after another.

After this, Gilberto gathered the villagers together. He confirms their faces one by one.

It’s been a long time since Gilberto became in charge of this village. Even though he doesn’t know their names, he would immediately notice an unfamiliar face amongst the villagers.

Incidentally, he notices a woman he’s never seen before. She’s a woman with quite a fine face.

It’s not strange to forget mediocre faces but it’s a different story for a fine face like that.

“Hey, you. You’re not a citizen of this village, right? Where did you come from?” (Gilberto)

The woman turns pale.

“F... from the neighboring village.” (woman)

“Did you take a movement notice?” (Gilberto)

It’s forbidden to migrate freely in the DeBell Territory. By all means, you need to take a notice.

People who break this law are punished.

The woman couldn’t answer Gilberto’s question.

“I see. You didn’t take a notice, huh?” (Gilberto)

The woman shakes as she nods to Gilberto’s inquiry.

“The reason you moved to this town would be... marriage?” (Gilberto)

The woman prostrates herself to him and asks for pardon.

Gilberto grins widely.

“Well, fine. Pay both the Wedding tax and the Bridal Night tax.” (Gilberto)

The man beside the woman turns pale and prostrates himself before Gilberto.

“I... I beg your forgiveness. Please, I will pay without fail within the month so...”

“No. Pay immediately. Well, If you agree to my conditions then I’ll forgive the Marriage Tax and Movement Notice.” (Gilberto)

Gilberto states his terms while grinning. That is, Gilberto would take the woman’s virginity right here right now.

The right to the first night belongs to the lord, Regal. Still, taking away the woman’s virginity won’t change having to pay the marriage tax. Naturally, not taking a movement notice is also a crime.

However, right now, Gilbert would sleep with the woman and take way her virginity. If you can promise not to tell anyone about it then he will overlook the marriage tax and the violation.

The couple didn’t have a choice.

CHAPTER 49

TERRITORIAL DISPUTE I

“This is the border fort?” (Ismere)

“Yes. As expected, is it different in Cretia? (Almis)

Ismere nods.

“Yes. In Cretia, the borders are fortified completely with stone forts. Although all the domestic checking posts are made with wood...” (Ismere)

In other words, our country’s forts are just ordinary checking posts in Cretia, huh...

“Or rather, why aren’t they fortified with stone?” (Ismere)

“Well, it’s because we don’t have the technology. Stoneworks need knowledge of mathematics. There’s also the skill needed to cut the stone to the appropriate size. Furthermore, you need quite the heavy labor to carry the stones.” (Almis)

Nonetheless, the only wooden border is here.

This fort was built 20 years ago. Since then, it’s only been repaired at times but never reconstructed.

There was a time a reconstruction plan was decided. Sometime after that, however, the Ars Territory was seized by King Ferrum.

King Ferrum didn’t have leeway to reconstruct the fort. Besides, he was able to establish friendly relations with King De Morgal so he didn’t need to.

That’s why it was left alone... However, since it returned to the Rosyth Kingdom, there’s no way we could leave it as is.

“As expected, it would be problematic if we don’t rebuild with stone.” (Ismere)

“That’s right... Nonetheless, there’s no place we can get stone suitable to be turned

into building stone in this territory.” (Almis)

Incidentally, we also don’t have the ability to cut them.

Even if I have Ismere direct the stone handling, without the materials then nothing could happen.

“Where can we get building stones again?” (Almis)

“If I recall correctly, the DeBell territory is this country’s biggest producer of building stones.” Tetra responds.

It’s the DeBell Territory?...

What to do? Should I ask them? But I don’t want to negotiate with that person...

“...It’s not like we have to get the stones from them just because they’re the biggest producer. I think we can also get them from the areas directly under the control of King Rosyth.” (Tetra)

“What. You should have told me that from the beginning. You made me jittery.” (Almis)

It’s better to completely avoid people you don’t agree with after all. Half-hearted superfluous relations deteriorate.

“I’ll order building stones from King Rosyth. Ismere. Can you do the planning?” (Almis)

Ismere bows.

“Yes, that’s alright. I can plan with just a few alterations that thing that was planned a considerably long time ago.” (Ismere)

“How long until It’ll be complete?” (Almis)

“Including the material estimates, I would say it’ll be done in a week’s time.” (Ismere)

Ismere sticks out her chest full of confidence.

“What kind of plan do you intend make?” Qingming asks Ismere.

“Hmm. We don’t plan to particularly revise much. It seems like Lord Almis wants to quickly finish the repairs, you see. For the meantime, we’ll reinforce the fort with wood. We’ll then construct a stone wall around it. If it’s this much then we should be able to do it even with Adernia Peninsula’s technological strength, right?” Ismere replies as she surveys the fort while writing down notes.

“Is that all?” Qingming asks, a little disappointed.

Ismere smiles bitterly.

“Right now, it’s that kind of talk. After that, we’ll slowly reconstruct it with a focus on stone walls. It’s a fort after all so we can’t destroy it completely and then rebuild.” (Ismere)

“I guese there’s that too. Haha. I’m sorry. I asked something strange, huh.” (Qingming)

Qingming makes an embarrassed smile.

“For the meantime, I absolutely need to accomplish this task. If I do that, my accomplishments will increase. After that would be the Ars Clan mansion. I want to improve so I can’t be helped. It’s something with a lot of pointlessness. If I persevere, they’ll get pleased with me and someday they’ll take me in as this country’s architect. With that I can participate in this country’s construction and...”

At that point, Ismere lets out a sigh.

“What’s wrong?” (Qingming)

“This is the end, right? The Rosyth Kingdom is small so they won’t be building anything big. It would be great if this Kingdom would just get bigger but the king seems to be dying and the successor seems to have little skill. I’m so worried.” (Ismere)

Qingming pats Ismere on the back to console her.

“Aren’t you an expert? You won’t get executed even if the country gets destroyed, you know... I’m sure you can still distinguish yourself at the De Morgal Kingdom. That is if they get to know that it’s you who designed this fort, ne? Well... that’s another story for when this fort becomes a big success.” (Qingming)

After hearing Qingming jokingly say this, Ismere smacks him in the head.

“Don’t tell me such reckless things!! What would you do if we get fired?” (Ismere)

Ismere asks in an angry tone. She’s smiling though.

What Ismere likes is herself being employed by a country. It’s not King Rosyth, not Almis, not the Ars Clan, and not anyone in particular.

“Yes. But I’m getting motivated. It’s my first work after all. If I succeed here then there’s a possibility King Rosyth will ask for me directly. Perhaps, even the Rozel Kingdom... Alright, let’s do our best!!”

Ismere gets pumped up.



Just as she promised, Ismere finished the plans in one week and showed me the necessary materials and labor. Impressive, it’s wonderful work that you could even call excellence exceeding oneself.

“As such, please let me procure building stones.” (Almis)

“I see. No problem. It’s for national defense, after all.” (Rosyth)

King Rosyth cheerfully accepts.

“By the way, did you not ask Regal DeBell? He’s your neighbor after all plus his building stones are high quality.” (Rosyth)

“Please cut me some slack.” (Almis)

King Rosyth grins.

This guy is mean.

“By the way, is it alright not fortifying your border with the DeBell Territory?” (Rosyth)

“...I haven’t come to a conclusion yet regarding the succession, you know?” (Almis)

King Rosyth smiles at my frank response.

“Either way, you’ll end up going to war with Regal DeBell, you know? After he becomes King, who would be the one eyesore for him? Well, in that case, it would become necessary to also build a fortress in your border with him.” (Rosyth)

“Do you intend to rush me? It’s not that simple you know?” (Almis)

After Regal DeBell becomes king, the possibility he will depose me would be unusually low. Why? Because I am entrusted with the border with King De Morgal after all.

Although the DeBell Territory also shares a border with King De Morgal... because of topographic reasons, the battle site would be in my Ars Territory.

If I were to defect to the De Morgal Kingdom, the Rosyth Kingdom’s defensive lines would retreat dramatically.

Regal DeBell would probably not want to cause bothersome problems immediately after he becomes King.

Besides, if you think about it clearly, I’ve already decided. I intend to sit down and carefully deliberate on the matter until the very last moment possible.

“By the way, why did you send Ismere over to my place?”

King Rosyth is not blind. Furthermore, he can speak Cretian.

I can’t find a reason for him to send away Ismere.

“She won’t be able to make plans for a fort against Regal DeBell if she was in my court, right? Besides, your place is better than the soon-to-die king’s place.” (Rosyth)

Certainly, if an architect employed by King Rosyth were to do such a thing then relations between the Rosyth Clan and the DeBell Clan would break down completely...

“Do you really want me to be king that much?” (Almis)

“Yes. I desire it. I want my beloved daughter to have a happy marriage. Besides, I don’t want that little brat to become my son. If I was made to have that kind of son then that

brat Ferrum would have been a much less objectionable choice.” (Rosyth)

You say that much, huh...

“I’ll think about it very hard. I shall give you my conclusion soon.”

I bow my head to King Rosyth and leave.



When I returned to the mansion, I don’t know why but everybody headed by Tetra is on the lookout for me.

“What is it? What happened?” (Almis)

“Refugees have come from the DeBell Territory.”

Another troublesome matter, huh...

Come to think of it, refugees always bring in troublesome matters with impeccable timing, huh.

“How many? What did the DeBell Clan say? Did they ask for them back?” (Almis)

“The numbers are 200 people. They still haven’t sent a message.”

There’s no way they won’t notice 200 people going missing, right?...

Before long, they’ll send a message asking them back.

“First, who knows that refugees have come?” (Almis)

“Only the members here and a portion of the soldiers. We’re concealing the information since Ron encountered the refugees exactly while he was in the border forest when he came to exterminate a bear.”

This means that should things go well, we could completely get away with feigning ignorance. In the first place, fleeing is a felony. Furthermore, they fled somewhere within the same country so the success rate is low.

They fled taking into account that much risk so it must have been a considerably horrible rule. Even in hearsay, I heard it was horrible.

Well, for the meantime...

“Call the refugees’ representative over. I want to talk to him.” (Almis)



“Are you the refugees’ representative?” (Almis)

“Yes, that is correct. Somehow, would you please take us in?” (rep)

“First, please tell me under what circumstances you escaped.”

If it’s a stupid reason then I intend to send them away.

First, concerning the taxation, if I were to summarize them then it would be something like this:

Wheat 30%

Land Tax

Cloth

Specialty Goods

Labor

Conscription

Marriage Tax

Death Tax

Funeral Tax

Bridal Night Tax

How terrible.

They thought of these many taxes. If it were me, just collecting them would be too troublesome.

Is Regal actually a hard worker?

How should I put it? Death tax and funeral tax are separate, huh. Marriage tax and bridal night tax, too.

With this, you'll understand why'd they flee, huh.

"In addition, the DeBell clan's relatives commit acts of lawlessness."

It was natural for them to rape and rob anyone, even killing on a whim.

It's governance at a level you don't hear about even in novels. Really dreadful.

Now then, I'm kind of suspecting they're exaggerating for it to be that horrible but...

I tell the representative to please exit the room and wait for a while. I then call Tetra, Yal, and Bolus.

I tell them the representative's story. I then ask:

"It was considerably horrible but, is that story believable?" (Almis)

Tetra nods.

"I heard this indirectly from other people, but for the most part that's the truth. There was someone crying about getting raped when she couldn't pay the bridal night tax."
(Tetra)

Yal also nods in agreement.

“I also asked about the taxes and... it’s true that they were being exploited considerably. They were even selling away their children at regular intervals.” (Yal)

I see...

Bolus also nods when I looked at him.

“I also often hear of the DeBell Territory’s cruelty. During the old Lord Ragou’s generation, refugees often come too. They flee here even during the time of King Ferrum.” (Bolus)

In other words, DeBell hell was even more frightening than Ferrum hell, huh... Someone is always better huh. Or should I say worse?

“However, as expected, things like murder and rape seem to be exaggerated. What do we do?”

Tetra asks.

Let’s see. I want to take them in. I’d be a failure as a human if I abandon them here.

I don’t know if they’ll live if I send everyone back to that horrible place.

But how can I deceive the DeBell...

In the Rosyth Kingdom, the permission of the lord is necessary for the migration of the population. In this situation, legally speaking, I’ll become the one in the wrong.

It’s often said that a bad law is still a law. At this rate, I’ll become a criminal but...

Now, now...

That’s right. If we hide the refugees somewhere far then can we make DeBell overlook us by feigning ignorance?

If we get lucky, King Rosyth would favor me in a trial after all.

However, do I have a place where Regal DeBell's investigation couldn't reach?...

I have one. It's just the right place.

"Then let's send them to our old village. We haven't managed to put together people to send there right? They definitely won't be found out there." (Almis)

That place only has 30 people even though it's the size that could support 200 people. It's such a huge waste.

Let's throw 200 refugees in there. The original 30 were also refugees in the first place. They'll probably get along fine since they have something in common. Let's make them understand what we felt that time, the pain of taking in new members.

Although they'll be a little bit over capacity, if we send them some aid then they should be fine.

Hiding them there is most suitable. There should still be a lot of the old barriers we erected remaining there so, for us, that forest should be a garden. We'll be able to immediately get rid of any invading dogs ridden by sorcerers.

Furthermore, unusually, very little clansmen know about the existence of that village so there should also be very little clansmen who would know that the village is my territory. It's a blind spot.

"It's decided, yes? Let's stealthily move them late at night."

"Then let's get this over quickly tonight."



"If it isn't Lord DeBell... Please come on in. We will present you a humble meal." (Almis)

I courteously welcome Regal DeBell. I intend to score as much good points as possible.

First, we will present a meal and make Regal be full. Aggression is calmed by a full

belly, don't you agree?

Now, after completing the meal...

"Lord DeBell. On what business did you grace us with your presence?" (Almis)

Well, we should know what he came here for, right? He's here for the runaways.

"Lord Ars. Our territory's population has fled, you see. There is a high possibility that they went to this territory. Do you not know of this?" (Regal)

I answer the question.

"I am terribly sorry but I have not known anything about that. Let us have it investigated immediately."

Regal raises his eyebrows.

The refugee's destination is a choice between my territory and De Morgal Kingdom after all. If you consider the distance, the one with the highest possibility would be my Ars Territory.

It's an obvious lie but... It's not like it's impossible that they'd fled to King De Morgal's place even if you say the possibility was low. It's not a big deal if they can't get any proof.

I ordered the sorcerers to erase all potential evidence such as the refugees' smell and footprints. It's the perfect crime.

Nonetheless, the other party doesn't seem to understand.

That's only natural.

"I see. By the way, Lord Almis Ars. Did you know about the law in this country... that you need the consent of the both lords in order to move a population?" (Regal)

"Yes, naturally. What about it?" (Almis)

As expected, he's doubting me, huh.

However, you don't have evidence so...

After this, I feigned ignorance no matter how many times I was asked the same thing by Regal.

"Damn!! To be playing dumb!" (Regal)

Regal kicks a chair away. He unsheathes his sword and slashes at the bed and wall.

After doing that to release some stress, he calls for Bermet, his close associate, and Gilberto, his close friend and most intimate relative.

"What do you think about this case?" (Regal)

Gilberto answers first.

"There's no mistake. I think they fled to the Ars Territory. It was the village I'm in charge of after all. If they fled from there, then without exception they won't be able to think of anywhere but the Ars Territory."

Naturally, it's not impossible for them to go to the De Morgal Kingdom. However, it would take them several days to go to the De Morgal Kingdom.

It's impossible to flee there in one night.

"However, because we don't have conclusive evidence, we will just lose if we sue them, don't you agree. Almis Ars seems to have gotten all evidence like smell and foot prints erased somehow after all."

Furthermore, it's obvious that King Rosyth favors Almis. We will be at a disadvantage in a trial. We will certainly lose.

"However, we managed to give a warning. There won't probably be a next time."
(Bermet)

As expected, even Almis won't be able to pull the same thing many times. That's Bermet's conclusion.

"In other words, we're compelled to give up..... I'm watching you. Almis Ars..." (Regal)

A week after this affair, a report that a large-scale rock salt mine was found in the eastern part of the Ars Territory near its border with the DeBell Territory has rapidly circulated around the Rosyth Kingdom.

CHAPTER 50

TERRITORIAL DISPUTE II

“Rock salt, huh... How wonderful.” (Almis)

I inspect the newly discovered mine.

You can sell rock salt overseas at an unusually high price.

It has a low price in the Adernia Peninsula because of its abundance there. However, there seems to be a shortage overseas.

The various states of Cretia and the Persis empire all have large populations so salt is a necessity.

“Goodness gracious, this is great, am I right?! Really! To think you will find a salt mine. By the way, there’s a method with a high success rate for digging rock salt. In exchange for teaching you that...” (Ains)

Ains approaches me while rubbing his hands.

However, Ismere cuts him off.

“No, my lord. There’s no need to partner with this merchant. I am knowledgeable about salt mining after all.” (Ismere)

“Haha, an architect knowing mining methods? What the hell are you saying, girl who couldn’t find work so she had to flee to the Adernia peninsula?” (Ains)

“How about you? Aren’t you just a merchant? You actually wanted to trade in the orient but the competition was so fierce you ended up coming here to procure salt to trade, isn’t that right!?” (Ismere)

Tension builds between the two. I can see sparks going off.

“Hey, Qingming. Are mechants doing trade in the Adernia Peninsula losers?” (Almis)

Qingming smiles bitterly.

“I don’t know... It’s true a lot of people have come to the orient and found their fortune... However, that’s not much different for a company the size of the Ainsworth Company. Rather, isn’t he a winner if he profits from quickly entering a market with little competition? The international salt trade seems profitable, you know. I heard you could bring the salt from the Adernia Peninsula to the Persis Empire and sell it ten times the price.” (Qingming)

Ten times? Even if you factor the transport expenses, it’s still quite a profit. I see. It means the only loser here is Ismere, right?

“Ismere. Do you really know how?” (Almis)

“Yes. It’s only natural.” (Ismere)

Ismere puffs out her chest.

Well, if you know how to, then there’s no problem.

“And so, Ains-san. Let’s just leave the mining methods for another time... however” (Almis)

I get close to Ains ear.

“I’ll favor you as much as possible.” (Almis)

“That’s... Thank you very much. I’ll consider this time as a service.” (Ains)

We laugh together.

“Uwaa, they’re making a creepy face...” (Ron)

Ron is taken aback.

“But this is truly good news!! Am I right, older brother?” (Roswald)

Roswald gets excited.

Well, it's true that this is good news but...

"There's a problem, huh..." (Almis)

"What problem is it?" Soyon tilts her head.

"Are you worried about taking a lot of salt? Something like the market price would go down? But we shouldn't be able to gather that much, right?" (Soyon)

Well, if it's something like gathering too much salt to the point that the price would go down, then it could be offset.

As one would expect, we wouldn't be able to gather that much, you know?

"This is originally DeBell Territory.

Tetra declares the problem.



"I've been thinking. Wasn't the eastern part of the Ars territory our DeBell Clan's territory from the very beginning?" (Regal)

Regal inquires after calling over his close aide, Bermet, and his close relative and second cousin, Gilberto.

"Now that you mention it, yes, that was formerly DeBell Clan property." (Gilberto)

"If I recall... It was territory seized by King Ferrum, am I correct?" (Bermet)

The two respond agreeably.

The eastern part of the Ars Territory.

This wasn't Ars Territory from the very beginning.

After seizing the Ars Territory, King Ferrum invaded the DeBell territory and seized this land from them. The territory was subjected to King Ferrum's rule for a long time. Then after that, all the former territories of King Ferrum, including those seized from the DeBell clan, was passed over to Almis.

That's why you could also say that the DeBell clan has a right to the eastern Ars Territory's ownership. Although this is just a forceful interpretation.

The ownership of a territory, after all, is all about battle and actual effective control after all. It's because of this that nobody speaks of things like territorial disputes.

However, it's a different story when you discover a rock salt mine.

"A lot of our territory's population were taken captive there in King Ferrum's time." Rather than taken captive, they fled there. In this circumstance, it's a problem of the words' nuance.

What's important is that the eastern part of the Ars Territory was DeBell Territory from the very beginning and that a lot of their old citizens live there.

"It was impossible with King Ferrum because he was the one who took it... but, under the present circumstances, do you think we can ask for it back?" Regal asks the two.

It's been five years since King Ferrum and Regal fought. It was a huge failure.

It was such a huge failure that Regal crapped himself while crying as he was defeated.

By the way, Regal was so embarrassed by what happened that you could get killed whenever he himself heard you talking about the incident. Therefore, that incident became a taboo in Regal's presence.

At that time, King Ferrum signed a secret non-aggression treaty with Regal while laughing his heart out. Should he decide to, King Ferrum could take out Regal DeBell whenever he wanted. However, there's a danger that he could get attacked from the

rear. Should Regal DeBell mobilize, then all the little hangers-on would also mobilize.

With that in mind, King Ferrum suggested the treaty.

While he's at it, he also aims to agitate King Rosyth's distrust of Regal and his happy little followers. They weren't mobilizing soldiers even though they border the enemy after all.

At any rate, Regal was afraid of King Ferrum.

However, King Ferrum suddenly dies.

The one in the Ars Territory now might be the son of the Griffon, but he's nothing but a teenage greenhorn with these stupid rumors that he's the son of the God of War.

Taking the territory back would be a walk in the park.

"Alright! Let's file the protest, Lord Regal!! Why, it's probably fine to just invade and take it back when they decline! They are illegally occupying our territory after all!!" Gilberto requests in a large voice.

It might be a little high-handed but the rock salt mine was too valuable to ignore. Regal, too, was about to get on with that plan but...

"Please wait a moment!!"

Bermet puts a stop to it.

"Please calm down and think it over. That is the new territory invested to Almis Ars by King Rosyth himself. Therefore, it can also be considered that our connection to that territory has already been severed. So they too have a claim they can flex. It is Almis Ars who has effective control of the territory so it's plain to see that King Rosyth will favor him in territorial dispute arbitration. I think it would be best if we don't send a protest. Furthermore, we will lose credibility if we use force." (Bermet)

Fundamentally speaking, there's a tendency that the first to resort to force would be the one perceived as bad, no matter how just their reason might be.

It's common to hear small disputes turn into full-scale armed conflicts. Two villages bordering each other would dispute a watering hole, then that dispute would turn into a skirmish between the two villages' respective feudal lords, then, before you know it, everyone is killing each other.

Nonetheless, the custom in the Rosyth Kingdom states that territorial disputes should, in principle, be talked over and be settled under the arbitration of the king. The use of force is a poor plan.

Furthermore, while disputes in using watering holes can happen between two parties, there's no way you could argue that somebody stole your rock salt mine.

"Besides, I think that we should avoid having a hostile relationship with Almis Ars. (Bermet)

"Your reason is?" Regal asks Bermet. He thinks that they should just destroy Ars after all.

There are a lot of clans harboring dissatisfaction at Almis' sudden rise after all so there's no way they'd be defeated.

"You should think of it this way. Once you become king, this country's foremost clansman would become Almis Ars. Establishing cordial relations is more desirable. Luckily, Almis Ars doesn't seem to have much ambition. He seems to be trying his best not antagonize us as much as possible." (Bermet)

"So we should watch out for him?" (Gilberto)

Gilberto looks at Bermet as if he's stupid. He has always thought of Bermet as a coward.

But Bermet just ignores Gilberto and presses Regal on.

"Do you understand? By the time you've succeeded to the throne, the country would be, without mistake, in a state of disorder. It's unavoidable but... there's a high risk that at that moment Almis Ars would invite King De Morgal inside the country. Therefore, Almis Ars should never be antagonized. On the contrary, it would be a very big plus for us if he becomes our ally, am I right?" (Bermet)

Regal becomes troubled.

For Regal, the plan he agrees the most with is Gilberto's plan. He is confident that he won't lose to Almis Ars. Although it's without basis, Regal firmly believes that he will win.

Having said that, Bermet has supported him up until now since the very start. Regal also acknowledges his skill. Bermet has never been wrong.

However...

"Those guys sheltered the refugees. Wouldn't you call that time an act of hostility?" (Regal)

"Certainly, that is correct but..." (Bermet)

"I cannot become friendly with that guy. That guy is an enemy. Therefore, I want to weaken him. By all means, I want to take back that rock salt mine but... does anyone have any good ideas?" Regal declares so.

Bermet lets out his inner thoughts with a huge sigh.

In politics, it's important to be able to be open to associate with various types of people. You also need to associate with someone you don't like.

Actually, when King Ferrum invaded, King Rosyth just left the DeBell Clan alone even if they never given even a little reinforcement.

This time, taking in just 200 refugees, should just be a small matter.

If you can find fault at something of this level, he wonders just how many enemies amongst the clansmen Regal will be stuck with after he becomes King...

Besides, it's not that simple to take away the mine.

They will most certainly lose in arbitration. Should they try to take it away by force, they will just be criticized and made to relinquish it.

Nonetheless, Regal could not be made to concede.

This should be the next best plan to do.

“If we ask for arbitration with King Rosyth, would the chance of success be low?”
(Regal)

Bermet answers Regal’s question.

“It’s hopelessly low... Should we ask for arbitration, our reputation would most certainly fall.” (Bermet)

“As far as we’re concerned, the best method after all is nothing but taking it by force, huh.” Gilberto triumphantly declares. He looks as if he’s going to lead the troops at this very moment.

However...

“In that case, we will completely become violators of the law.” (Bermet)

“Then what do you suggest we do!!” (Gilberto)

Bermet answers the question.

“It’s fine if we make them shoot the first arrow.”

CHAPTER 51

TERRITORIAL DISPUTE III

“This is so bothersome... I want to quickly go home.”

“Don’t say that. This is our job, you know.”

“That’s right. We have to do this properly.”

Ron, Roswald, and Soyon are policing the border with the DeBell Territory.

The patrol force consists of 60 cavalry and 100 infantry. It’s a moderate scope.

There’s a reason they had to send this much to patrol. That is... a pact with Regal DeBell.

From now on, in the case refugees came again, DeBell wanted the Ars Clan to intensify patrols so they could be caught.

In other words, they’re implying that they will overlook last time but the next time would be unforgiveable.

Almis doesn’t have any intention to completely antagonize the DeBell clan at present. That’s why we he conceded to the treaty and allowed the patrols.

“Captain! There seems to be a conflict at that direction between the DeBell Territory’s forces and a group that looks like refugees.”

“Is that so? Let’s head there immediately.” (Ron)

Ron and company gather together the light skirmisher soldiers and head out to the scene of the action.



The clear boundary that divides the Ars Territory and the DeBell Territory is a river. It's a river that's as high as a man's waist in its deepest points. Roughly at the eastern bank of the river is the Ars Territory while at the western bank is the DeBell Territory.

Ron and company arrives quickly and conveys to the refugees:

"Citizens are barred from migrating arbitrarily. Be obedient and return peacefully to the DeBell Territory!!"

After hearing this, the refugees drop their shoulders and stop all resistance.

They did not immediately follow the DeBell soldiers straddling the border. But the story became different when it came to the Ars soldiers they were on the lookout for. The failure of their escape was decided.

From the very beginning, they went and fled after hearing the rumor that some people successfully fled to the Ars Territory. That the lord of the Ars clan accepted the fugitives.

Therefore, the shock was great. They couldn't resist and got arrested by the DeBell soldiers.

By all rights, they would have been taken back uneventfully and that would be the end of it.

However, this time is different.

"Hey!! What the hell are you doing!!"

Roswald shouts.

The DeBell soldiers begin to massacre the refugees in plain sight of Roswald. Furthermore, they didn't do so by decapitating them.

They kill the refugees by hitting them, kicking them, breaking their bones, and various other horrible means. It's as if they're putting up a show for Roswald and the others.

"Hey!! Isn't that just a kid!!"

The soldiers begin to mercilessly kill even the little children. Little by little they cut off their bodies. Ron hears the children's screams

"...How cruel."

The soldiers rape the women right before Ron and the others. They strangled. They plucked out the eyes for fun. They violated the refugees as if they were toys.

Soyon reflexively buries her face on Ron's chest. However, even if she covered her face, the shrieks continue to enter her ears. No matter how hard she tried to cover her ears, the shouts penetrate through the gaps.

However, they won't be able to do anything about them. The reason is they couldn't come over to the DeBell Territory.

The Ars soldiers don't have the power to challenge jurisdiction. If Almis were here, then everything could have turned out differently but...

Roswald involuntarily bites his lips. They can't do anything.

It would only hurt if they stayed here any longer. It's time to decide to return.

"Save us!!!" They hear a little girl's scream. Roswald reflexively looks back.

The little girl is being held down by several men. She was around five years old... she probably hasn't even gotten her first menstruation.

Roswald's hand moves on its own. A spear leaves his hands and after a while hits the heart of the raping soldier.

From that point on, the Ars soldiers attacked the DeBell soldiers one by one and began saving the refugees.



“We got ‘em, huh.” (Bermet)

“As expected of my Bermet!!” Regal is in high spirits.

It’s a case where they make the enemy do the first move because, after all, taking the mine away by force would appear untimely. It’s only natural to mobilize the army for defense if the enemy made the first move.

After that, they would make their own move after the enemy guards escape. After they secure the rock salt mines, they would send an emissary to Almis Ars in the confusion to make peace. They would ask for the control of the salt mine in exchange for overlooking the pre-emptive attack.

By Bermet’s estimate, they would probably be able to take about a third of the salt mine.

As expected, taking all of the mine would probably be impossible. The rock salt mine holds vast profits after all.

Nonetheless, there’s a huge controversial point in the plan. People will hear of the scandal that they massacred refugees. Even if they were just refugees, people would fault you and argue that massacring them was overkill.

So, what do you do about that?

If they were criminals that deserved to die, then there won’t be a problem.

In the DeBell Territory, there are a lot of villages that have defaulted on their tax payments many times over. In the DeBell Territory, the punishment for exceeding a certain number of years for tax defaulting is the death penalty.

Nonetheless, it's not like dead bodies will turn into gold coins. You can't get something from nothing so it couldn't be helped. So, the custom was to just let them off.

They'll be lent next year's seed rice so that they could pay their taxes next year.

However, this time, they went with not forgiving the defaulters. Furthermore, they moved them to a prison with murderers and robbers near the Ars Territory.

A few will be executed in the village while the others will be threatened. After this, they spread a rumor amongst them through the soldier guards' idle chatter.

That should they escape to the Ars Territory, they'll be saved.

After that, the guards would end up drunk by coincidence and would carelessly forget to close the lock.

With this, the operation was complete.

'In short, they were criminals so we killed them when they tried to escape. What's wrong with that?'

Something like that.

As for Bermet, he actually wanted to stop the heavy taxation... but Regal's relatives got in his way.

Something like "If the taxes went down, then our income would fall down too."

He wanted to keep them away somehow but... Regal keeps on appointing his relatives so it couldn't go well.

"Alright then, I'll be heading out. Wait for the good news for me, Lord Bermet." Said the head of those troublesome relatives, Gilberto.

Well, his physical strength was high and he is excellent and talented as a commander when leading a 100 person strong unit.

On the other hand you couldn't say he's cut out for leading an army bigger than that.

Having said that, he is less objectionable than the other relatives. They don't have anything but strong spirit that says 'Let us proceed to the battlefield with our own feet and take down the enemy.' Other people, without doing their jobs properly, do nothing but play around to spend their time after all.

"Please be victorious. It would be a big problem after all if you fail." (Bermet)

Gilberto is leading 320 troops this time. The opposing force probably has a 100 to 200.

Should he lose here, in addition to their despotic rule, rumors of their incompetence as soldiers would be born. He actually wanted to prepare a larger army but... if he brought an even larger army then it wouldn't seem as if it were an accidental encounter. This much is the limit.

"Fufu, if the difference between our forces is this much, then these would be enough. From what I heard, the enemy commander is nothing more than a little brat before the age of 20. There's no way he could win against me who's run about in numerous battlefields." (Gilberto)

"Don't be reckless. The enemy managed to defeat King Ferrum." (Bermet)

"Aren't you worrying too much? Lord Bermet!!"

Gilberto bursts into laughter.



"How would you take responsibility? Roswald." (Ron)

"Hey, don't just push all of it on me. Didn't you also do it!!" (Roswald)

Ron and Roswald starts to bicker as to who's responsible.

Ron argues that it was Roswald who did it first so he's responsible.

Roswald argues that since Ron joined in after him makes him responsible too.

Nonetheless, bickering here would just aggravate the situation.

"Tei!" (Soyon)

" 'Ouch!' "

The two crouches after they get hit on the head with a stick by Soyon.

"We couldn't have helped but do it, don't you agree? For the meantime, let's bring everyone to a safeplace... after that" (Soyon)

It's a sound argument. Thankfully, there's quite a big mountain a kilometer from here that has a small village. It can be seen from here so walking there should be fine.

With this, the refugee issue is postponed for the meantime.

Next is...



"For the meantime, all the DeBell soldiers have been either captured or killed so the enemy shouldn't have received any information, right?..." (Ron)

Ron and the others could clearly see the DeBell army before them.

They number around 200 to 300. Even if you were a little off in your estimates, the army in the distance was clearly larger than Ron and company.

"How many soldiers did we bring again?" Ron asks Roswald and Soyon.

"To cover a large area, we brought around 60 cavalry. The infantry is around 100 while the bowmen, 10."

"We also have 40 bomb spears. Almis told us to bring it for protection just in case."

It's unreliable war potential when against around 300 enemies.

"Should we escape?" (Roswald)

"If we escape then saving these people would become for naught. Besides, the village behind is also dangerous. Also..." (Ron)

At the moment Ron cut his words, he looks at the enemy.

"We would be at an advantage in the negotiation table if we win here right? Won't we then be able to overturn the situation?" (Ron)

"You think so? Don't you feel like that's fundamentally flawed?" (Roswald)

Roswald looks at Ron with doubtful eyes.

However, Ron is brimming with confidence.

"Well, if we escape here and went home, then we would really be the aggressors. We have to keep that in check." Soyon expresses her agreement with Ron.

For Roswald, if they preemptively strike here and defeat the enemy who came for defense, wouldn't it become an unnecessarily big problem? Though he thought that, since both Ron and Soyon both thought it was fine so he gave his agreement.

Furthermore, since they did went and save the villagers then they also have the responsibility to see it through.

"Then should we go with that and win? We only have a small force though..." (Ron)

"It would be fine if we just use the cavalry, right?" Roswald suggests.

If they utilized the cavalry's mobility, then it should be possible to flank the hoplites.

However...

“While it’s true that the weak point of the hoplite is the flank,... if we went with that then could we match them in numbers?

Because hoplites have unusually long spears, they have difficulty in changing course.

Under those circumstances, they should probably be annihilated if the cavalry with the same number strikes them at the flank.

However, Ron and company only have 60 cavalry while the enemy numbered around 300. With that difference, there’s a high possibility of having the tables turned on them.

They might win if they strike the enemy at the rear and not the flank without having to match them in numbers, but...

That would be impossible without the element of surprise.

“Hey, I thought of something. Can I say it?” Soyon proposes a plan.

After hearing it, Ron and Roswald both declare:

“That’s it!!!”

CHAPTER 52

TERRITORIAL DISPUTE IV

The Ars army and the DeBell army faces each other as they stood on the opposite sides of the river.

Up until now, they still haven't contacted Almis.

They should have been able to contact him within several hours if they use a falcon. However, the only one who could use a falcon here is Soyon. And in order for the plan to succeed, Soyon is necessary ((so they couldn't make her soul-ride the falcon.))

Their formation is something like this:

■■■■■	
■←Elite Unit + Gilberto	DeBell Army
~~~~~	
RIVER	
~~~~~	
aaaaaaaa■←Elite Unit + Ron	Ars Army
■■■■■ □□	
aaaaaaaa↑	(Soyon, the Bowmen, and the
Roswald + Cavalry	Bomb Spears are behind the infantry)

It looks like the overwhelmingly numerically inferior Ars army, because they spread out thinly to not be encircled and annihilated, would immediately pull out when you collide with them squarely.

Both armies immediately went into combat without particularly discussing anything first.

"We are double the size of the enemy. We'll take down these treaty-breaking cowards!!" Gilberto begins his advance.

The two armies collide in the middle of the river.

The river is unusually shallow that the deepest part reach only up to the lower part of the knee.

Naturally, the two armies fought only in the shallow parts of the river, that reaching up to the ankle.

You would have thought that the DeBell army, holding the size advantage, would immediately be tearing apart and destroying the Ars Army.

However, the battle is progressing evenly.

There are three reasons.

The first reason is the difference in morale.

The DeBell Army is army made with conscripted troops. Their morale is unusually low and their training lacking. Furthermore, all of them are peasants.

They've seen their fellow countrymen oppressed before their very eyes. To be made to fight someone who saved those countrymen is...

With this, it's unreasonable for them to increase their morale.

Furthermore, it's a huge factor that they don't have that much experience with war itself. They exchanged a secret agreement with King Ferrum and held a ceasefire after all.

Compared to that, the Ars Army are all recruited soldiers so their morale is high. A lot of them also were originally farmers so they too don't have much training. However, they have fought with the Ferrum Army countless of times so they are experienced in battle. Besides, there exists in them a great cause to free and protect oppressed people from tyrannical rule.

The second reason is the difference in equipment.

First, a third of the DeBell Army's shields are made of wood. The remaining two-thirds are bronze.

A third of their armor are made of wood while the remaining two-thirds are leather. Lastly, their spears are all bronze each with a length of 3 meters.

They seemed to essentially want to issue even longer spears, if you look at it. However, without sufficient skill, the spears would be unusable. Rather, if you consider skill, then the spears are still a little too long.

In the other party, the Ars Army's shields are all bronze. Their armors are all-leather too. The spears are four meters long with all spearheads made of iron.

The third reason is the bowmen responsible for rear support.

The DeBell Army's bowmen are only conscripted hunters. Their bows are small because they're only used for hunting in the forest while their arrowheads are made of stone.

In the other party, the Ars Army's bowmen are elites tempered by Gram himself. Their bows are high powered long bows while their arrowheads are made of iron.

The Ars Army's bowmen are shooting down the DeBell soldiers one by one, but the DeBell Army's bowmen, in response, could not even send any kind of damage.

"Is the the right flank of the Ars Army a collection of monsters?" shouts a soldier of the DeBell Army's left flank.

All of the soldiers assigned in the right flank of the Ars Army are people under the influence of Almis' divine protection. While some of them got injured, not even one of them got killed. Even wounds that would normally be fatal are just ordinary wounds for them, after all.

Thus, little by little, the DeBell army's left flank starts to get routed.

Ron's efforts particularly stand out.

"Toryaaaaaaaaa!!"

Ron, while holding a 5-meter long spear with his left hand, cuts a spear that jumped out at his heart with a sword in his right hand and making it impossible to use.

Naturally, the DeBell Army's spears are concentrated against such a seemingly monstrous Ron but as a result a lot of them are rendered useless.

Having said that, the DeBell Army brought two times more soldiers. Gradually, they

begin to obtain the upper hand.

“Push them back!! Kill them all!!”

Gilberto shouts with a large voice as they slowly pushed back the Ars Army.

As if they were getting pushed back, the Ars Army move to the center of the river and...

By the time anyone noticed, both armies became soaked with water that had gone from their knees up to half their bodies.

“Alright, it’s our turn! Let’s immediately go around and head for their rear!!!”

Roswald and his cavalrymen kick their horses in the abdomen crossing over the shallow parts of the river to go around their enemy.

Naturally, the DeBell Army tries to divert a part of their army to deal with them but...

“Hey, it’s taking too long!! What the hell are you doing?”

“We apologize! Our feet are getting slowed down by the water and...”

The soldiers in the rear couldn’t change course considerably. It was quite harder than normal because of the long spears.

Furthermore, this was the middle of the river.

Gilberto raises his voice to urge his soldiers on.

However, it had the opposite effect.

The riverbed is not flat but rugged because of stones. The water level is different, too.

It’s obvious that if you hurried them to change course under these circumstances then the formation would break. Thus, here, the 40 bomb spears swoop down as if signaling the final blow.

The explosion occurs at the center making the formation collapse horribly.

Furthermore...

“It’s temporary fire! It’s just to deceive the eye!!”

As Soyon shouts this, a blaze rages from the explosion point. That however is not a real blaze. It’s a sorcerer’s illusion.

They pulverized some grass with a dazzle effect and mixed it with the gunpowder beforehand. It was originally a countermeasure for the refugees.

The grass’ particles scatter when the gunpowder explodes. This will then enter a human body.

After that, the sorceress can use the grass as an intermediary.

Dazzle sorcery is not omnipotent. It’s an impossible charm. In other words, it’s impossible to make it seem water would appear suddenly from an empty space.

However, they prepared a glass cup and it was surprisingly simple to make it seem full of water.

Thus, for the dazzle sorcery, against group targets, it should easily work if you made them lose their calm judgement.

Now, an actual blaze rages forth from the gunpowder’s explosion and the target is a group of 300 people. Furthermore, they’re in a state of confusion.

In other words, it’s the perfect timing.

Nonetheless, the affected side’s sorcerer would soon see through it and cancel it. This is because she would get an uncomfortable feeling since she couldn’t feel some hotness in the first place.

However, ((Soyon)) didn’t really need a long time to deceive the enemy. Even if they get to understand that it’s an illusion, the visual terror still remains.

Besides, once the formation breaks, just like a person’s heart/spirit, it can’t be immediately returned to the original.

“The enemy is considerably exposing their backs defenselessly, huh... just as planned. Alright, cut them down!!!”

Roswald assaults the DeBell Army's rear.



The DeBell Army was completely routed.

The Ars Army did not pursue.

As expected, if they pursued and invaded the enemy's territory then they would be viewed negatively.

Even after all of this happened.

The Ars Army captured the DeBell soldiers one by one. They killed those who resisted.

Gilberto desperately ran for his life. To the Ars Territory.

It's not like he's fleeing to the Ars Territory because he wanted to.

The Ars Army went around to the back of the DeBell Army and routed them. With this, the Ars Army Infantry suddenly began to recover their strength and the DeBell Army ended up getting caught in the middle.

Gilberto was in disorder. From the very beginning, he was not a person of a caliber who could command an army more than a hundred troops.

He also didn't have that much actual combat experience. All he had was ((experience)) to the degree of subjugating fugitives and rebelling peasants.

Naturally, he probably couldn't even pretend to skillfully withdraw his devastated allies after being attacked by the enemy from the front and back.

He, like the other soldiers, recklessly fled, and without realizing it he was running to the Ars Territory.

"You're the enemy commander, right? I'll get that neck of yours!!!"

A man riding a horse chases him from behind.



Roswald chases after the enemy commander.

Roswald is running on horseback while the enemy is on foot.

In the blink of an eye, the distance shortens.

Roswald raises his spear..... then calms down.

This battle.

The one to blame was without doubt the DeBell Army but the error is ours.

No matter what the reason, the first one who fought was us.

In this situation, is it fine to shoot at the enemy commander?

This is without a doubt a close person to Regal. A celebrated person who became the leader of a whole army. By some chance, he could be his relative and a great clansman.

Roswald puts himself in the reverse standpoint.

In other words, the one who got pre-emptively attacked would be them and Ron gets killed in the revenge invasion.

In this situation, would I be able to forgive the enemy?

Would Almis allow that to happen?

No. It's unforgivable.

They would certainly ask King Rosyth to compensate for his life.

In other words, in this situation, killing this man would be exceedingly bad.

Conversely, if we let him live, then he'll be a card in the negotiations.

Roswald rotates the spear and points down its other end. He knocks down the enemy commander taking great pains to make sure he won't receive injury as much as

possible.

The enemy commander splendidly kisses the ground.

Roswald descends from the horse and gently restrains the commander while contemplating whether he made the wrong decision.

“You’ve been captured!! Please be obedient unless you want to forfeit your life.” He’s probably a distinguished person so Roswald uses polite speech.

With this, Gilberto gets captured by Roswald.

Author’s Note:

Virgar is house-sitting right now.

CHAPTER 53

TERRITORIAL DISPUTE V

“What did you just do...” (Almis)

I hold my head after hearing Ron’s report.

Just what the hell...

“I... I’m sorry...” (Ron)

“No, it’s fine. Saving the fugitives was... well, it’s bad but as a human, you did well, I think. Yes. You did well in that situation. However, why did turn the tables on them!!!” (Almis)

If we had just sent them an earnest apology then we could probably have make do but... with this didn’t we just completely make them enemies?!

It still hasn’t even been a week since the last refugee incident!!

“Well, Almis. Calm down. No matter how you look at it, the enemy’s objective was the salt mine. We’ve secured it for the meantime so I didn’t think that was a horrible plan. In fact, I think it was great given the huge difference in our military force.”

Tetra sticks up for Ron.

Well, certainly that’s correct. They will probably ask for the salt mine as reparations though.

“By the way, what did you do about Lord Regal’s second cousin you captured, that Lord Gilberto?” (Almis)

“Well, he kept complaining at the beginning but he got drunk and fell asleep after we brought out some spirits for him to drink.” (Ron)

Hey, don’t drink the liquor than an enemy brought out. Also, don’t sleep!

Perhaps, he's actually a big-shot?

Nevertheless, Roswald made a good call huh. If he had killed Gilberto then for sure Ron's, Roswald's and Soyon's lives would be demanded and that would be next to impossible to reject.

Getting captured is without a doubt a scandal though. The DeBell Clan would probably want to cover it up.

It seems we obtained a good card.

"It can't be helped. Please be careful from here on out. By the way,... the casualties are?" (Almis)

I feel a little nervous.

It was a battle so it would be normal for there to be deaths.

However... if possible I don't want anyone from the same village as me to die. They are people whose faces, names, and lives I know very well, after all.

"...Deaths are 10 people. All of them are recruited soldiers." (Ron)

I see...

My nervousness settles down.

I might have been lacking as a leader but... still I want them to forgive me.

"However..." Ron makes a difficult face.

Soyon takes over for Ron.

“Three people are got injured – one in the right hand, one in the left leg, and another in the left hand. All of them got festered and rotten so I made the decision to amputate them.”

I see...

Well, that’s somewhat less objectionable to dying.

“Then let’s visit them immediately.” (Almis)

I rise up.



The three have already woken up.

Because they’re under the influence of my divine protection, their amputation wounds healed in the blink of an eye. However, it still couldn’t get back their lost limbs.

The three show disappointed faces.

“I’m sorry...” (Injured Guy)

“I got humbly beaten...” (Guy #2)

“To be not able to fight anymore for Almis-san’s sake...” (Guy #3)

These guys...

Why are you worrying about that when you’re seriously injured!

I stroke the heads of these three people while feeling a mixture of happiness and a little dismay.

“Stupid!! We lack talented people right now, you know? I can’t let you guys rest just because you lost a limb or two, right? I’ll have you guys do paper work. It’ll be something tougher than the battlefield so prepare yourselves, okay?” (Almis)

The three's faces light up.

It seems my support wasn't wrong.

Even so...

This is hard, huh...



“Screw him!!!!!! That brat!!!!”

Regal's been hitting things for quite some time now. There are already more than 10 furniture and ornaments nearing their last moments.

Bermet exhales his heart out while looking at that scene.

While Regal may be angry at Almis, Bermet is angry at Gilberto.

Why the hell did Gilberto lose even though they've prepared for the inevitable scandal and everything was set up for him. Bermet tries to find an answer for nearly an hour.

In the end, he got captured.

If he had just died then, the balance of power would be better here and they would be able to demand vast amounts of money for indemnity... but...

With this, they could not avoid having a scandal that the DeBell Clan has weak soldiers. What with they hopelessly lost even though they had a double size advantage, after all.

Although it couldn't be helped if you say it was inevitable since, except in number, they completely lose in equipment, experience, and command.

Without a doubt, the DeBell Clan has certainly weakened in its unifying power. It would be best if they prepare for seeing various clanmen switching sides to the Ars Clan.

Nonetheless...

"We can secure the rock salt mine."

From the very beginning, it was possible to secure it regardless if they won or lost.

If they had won, then there won't be problems in imposing effective control. If they had lost, they could take it away as reparations.

This time, they will go with demanding it as reparation.

They were the victims after all.

Well it was problematic that Gilberto got captured but...

With this, demanding the whole salt mine would seem very tough. As such...

Bermet continues to ponder over the matter.

He works over the best policy to do about it.

It's desirable to settle out of court rather than go for arbitration.

They wouldn't want the scandal to propagate further.

Arbitration would be more advantageous for the opposing party so it couldn't be helped if they demanded favorable conditions for them in order to agree with settling it out of court.

“Lord Regal. I’ll head for the Ars Territory. Please wait for the good news.” Bermet heads out alone as he declares so to Regal.



“If possible, we don’t want the matter to get bigger so let us just settle out of court and get this over with.” (Bermet)

An old man declares such before me.

This old person seems to be called Bermet. His body looks like an old dried up tree but his eyes show a deep intelligence.

At the very least, he doesn’t seem to be a stupid old man.

“Settlement, is it? I wanted to officially end this in arbitration, however.” (Almis)

Since King Rosyth would favor me after all.

Arbitration would be more advantageous. If I shout the opposite party’s injustices with a loud voice, the blame would move greatly towards the DeBell Clan and the one towards mine would relatively weaken.

“Should we end up with arbitration this time, we will demand for the heads of the people responsible.”

You really hit where it hurts huh...

Did they know that I hold Ron and the others dear?

Even if you say arbitration would be more advantageous, I don’t know up to what extent I can reduce the penalties. It’s not like Ron and the others have royal blood in them nor are they great clansmen. They’re just commoners.

There’s no way some kind of punishment wouldn’t fall upon them. As expected, settlement would be the safer way to go.

Well. It’s going according to my assumptions.

“I see. Our territory is lacking in human resources, you see. Their deaths would be bad. Alright. Depending on the conditions, let us aim to end this in a settlement.” (Almis)

Bermet takes out a pen and parchment as I say so.

You could write old man?

“First, Condition No.1, we want to receive an apology from your side. The incident happened because you couldn’t discipline your soldiers properly.” (Bermet)

“I understand. My unworthiness has caused things to come to this.”

I will apologize so I had Tetra bring me the paper.

Settlement Conditions

I, Almis Ars, accept fault for this incident and apologize.

For the meantime, we complete the first line.

The next matter would be about money.

“Alright, as for the next condition... we demand rights over the whole rock salt mine.” (Bermet)

“That’s too much, right? Only a third.” (Almis)

Our opinions diverge.

Nonetheless, you have to persist here.

“Then let’s go with this. We shall surrender two-thirds of the rights to the mine to you.

In exchange, we shall release Lord Gilberto, who we've taken as prisoner-of-war, without compensation." (Almis)

Well, can this be a compromise?

As expected, demanding the ransom money would be...

Moreover, the other party won't seem to assent to just a third of the mine.

"Releasing the prisoner is only natural. However, we would be troubled if you don't compensate for the equipment. Our soldiers were pointlessly reduced because of you, didn't you know?" (Bermet)

"I understand. Then let's have the compensation for the equipment be paid in wheat. In exchange, the remaining third of the mines shall be ours. In addition to this, the one who will conduct the punishment of the fugitives shall be us." (Almis)

With this, we would be able to keep face while allowing the other party to profit.

How about it?

Unfortunately for them, we have enough wheat. We could also afford to just return the equipment as is.

"...Then that should be fine. We will accept."

The Settlement Conditions are:

Almis Ars shall surrender two-thirds of the rights to the Salt Mine.

Almis Ars shall release the prisoner of war without ransom.

Almis Ars shall pay wheat as compensation for the equipment reparations.

With this, it ends.

We'll settle with this for now.



"I see. And with that, you settled, am I right? You could have won if you had pushed for arbitration, you know?" (Rosyth)

"If I became even more indebted to you then you would probably force me to agree to succeed the throne." (Almis)

King Rosyth laughs scornfully.

"What are you even saying after having this territorial dispute... if that brat becomes king then your position would become dangerous, you know? It's not just that. Your family and your subordinates too. There's a lot of cases since long ago that the victor in a war takes in the loser's wife as a concubine." (Rosyth)

Don't tell me unpleasant things...

Jeez.

Even I know that much.

However, this is not a problem you could just conclude that easily.

Once you've decided then you wouldn't be able to take it back. That's why I'm troubled.

It's not like I specifically want to become king.

However, I do want to marry Julia.

Even I don't understand what I want to do.

"Well, that's fine. You've really thought about this, huh. It'll be troublesome if you'll regret it after all. Then let's talk about other things... didn't you just have a crushing victory? It's become the talk of the town, you know. That the 300 man-strong DeBell Army lost to the 160 man-strong Ars Army." (Rosyth)

"It's not like I was the one who won, you know. It was my subordinates'..... Ron and the others' victory." (Almis)

"The subordinate's feat is the lord's feat, you know. There are people who couldn't use talented subordinates even though they have them. Conversely, there are people who bring out the very best out of their subordinates, even out of the not so talented ones. I also put the value of your subordinates into you." (Rosyth)

Rosyth violently coughs after saying so. It seems his illness have completely progressed.

Raymond-san even said that he doesn't know whether he could still hold out for a year.

"By the way, what did they do to win? Teach it to me." (Rosyth)

"That's alright. However, I can only say as much as I've heard..." (Almis)

I speak of Ron and the others' strategy – the clever use of cavalry and topography. Honestly, I was surprised.

When the hell did the guys learn about tactics?

When I think back, the guys talk a lot with Bartolo... so they probably learned from there."

Well, even if they weren't hoplites, any branch of the army has the rear as the same weak point. Plus, it's easy to predict that the formation would crumble if you hurriedly changed directions in the middle of a river.

They were probably also lucky that the enemy used centuries (100 men). If they had used legions (10,000 men), then it would take time for the cavalry to go around them.

It's a small number vs a small number so they were able to complete the tactic.

"I see. It's quite simple huh. I heard they defeated an enemy twice their size so I was thinking what kind of clever scheme they used but..." (Rosyth)

"Clever schemes don't work all the time after all. Simple tactics rarely fail so I think they're more reliable." (Almis)

As a certain famous general used to say, 'Rather than hitting the enemy with a small force, bring a big army from the start and hit them with it.'

My duty is to make sure that we don't get cornered into a situation where we have use something like clever schemes, don't you agree?

"I see. There's one thing I absolutely have to tell you." (Rosyth)

"What would that be?" (Almis)

"The De Morgal Kingdom and the Gillbed Kingdom have agreed to a truce. It appears that it was to oppose the Rozel Kingdom but... it's probably so they could advance south, don't you agree. A war will happen before long." (Rosyth)

The De Morgal Kingdom... I heard that Kingdom's combined forces numbered around 10,000. If they mobilized to the limit, then they could probably reach around 30,000 soldiers.

"10,000 soldiers are coming, huh?" (Almis)

"I'm afraid so. That country can mobilize up to 30,000 soldiers. At the very least, they

will probably mobilize around 15,000. However, the more soldiers they mobilize then the more time it'll take. That country's great clans are as powerful as ours. If they're planning a large-scale war then adjustment is necessary. I fear we have us much as half a year. Until then, we'll have to prepare countermeasures. We were caught off guard when that brat Ferrum attacked but... this time, we know in advance. We could probably mobilize around 7,000." (Ferrum)

Well, excluding the great clans, the number of soldiers the Rosyth Royal Family could independently mobilize is around 4,000.

If you think it's necessary to fortify our borders with other countries... then the number of soldiers this country can mobilize is around 6,000?

However, that figure would be dependent upon diplomacy.

It seems very grave, huh.

"Hurry up the fort construction. We should hold them back there at all costs." (Rosyth)

"I understand. Ismere is doing here very bests right now, you know." (Almis)

I also need to increase gunpowder production, huh.

It seems we would need a large quantity.

CHAPTER 54

WORRIES I

The conversation with King Rosyth ends and I exit the room. Outside, I find Julia waiting for me.

“It’s been a long time. Did you come to give me your conclusion?” (Julia)

I look straight into Julia’s eyes and answer.

“.....Sorry. I’m still thinking about it. I’ll certainly give out my answer before the deadline.” (Almis)

Julia smiles.

“I see. Please. Hurry up if you can. By the way... can we talk for a while?”

Julia pulls on my hand.



“You, this isn’t the situation to be meeting with me secretly, you know.” (Almis)

“But if I didn’t do this then I won’t be able to talk with you, right?” (Julia)

I was brought to somewhere by Julia. This place seems to be her private room.

...This isn’t a plan to make me drink some strange medicine and make a fait accompli, right?

I look around Julia’s room. It has various furnishings as well as sorcery tools here and there and it reeks of strange medicine.

It also has a considerable collection of books, too.

At the very least, this isn’t like a room of a typical modern Japanese girl.

Although, I don’t know whether this is the typical room of an Adernian Princess or a Julia-only thing... it’s probably the latter.

By the way, as for Tetra's room, there are 6 prototype wands, materials for making the wand, magical squares, paper and magical stones scattered about in great quantity. Although the person herself says she intentionally arranged the room as such, it's a lie since you'll always see her seemingly looking around for something.

Suddenly, a plant with a white flower catches my attention.

"Is this opium poppy?" (Almis)

"You're well informed, huh. Have you used it for something?" (Julia)

"No, I haven't. Although I've seen one growing in the forest." (Almis)

By the way, I was taught by Griffon-sama that you could use it as medicine.

Poppy has a pain killing effect so it's very excellent as medicine.

It's also commonly used as a medium for Illusion sorcery. This is the one we mixed in the gunpowder.

By the way, it's also quite excellent as a narcotic. It can put a lion to sleep.

"Is this female hemp plant?" (Almis)

"Well, yes. Though I wonder if, as medicine, poppy would be better? Hemp's hallucinogenic effects are light so they don't have much value in sorcery. Well, how about recreation, hmm... don't think I want to smoke it though. You can live even without smoking it, right." (Julia)

In other words, it's marijuana.

They smoke a lot of this in the Adernia Peninsula... perhaps I should say the west.

That's because it's easy to cultivate and they think it's probably not that poisonous.

I think other people who smoke this should just do what ever the hell they want. However, I don't want any people important to me to be smoking this."

"This flower... It's quite beautiful although I'm not familiar with it. Is this also a narcotic? (Almis)

"Yes! Yes! It's something I got from the orient. I asked the Cretians, but the

hallucinogenic effect was amazing. I heard it's called Morning Glory. I tried it out on a mouse for now but just looking at him is quite frightening." (Julia)

Morning glory as a hallucinogen...

I've heard of these.

These are Jimsonweed.

They also have Datura in this world, huh.

If they have poppy opium and marijuana then they naturally have these too.

Julia... experimenting on animals is convenient but, please don't ever experiment on your own body, okay?

"Actually, see. I've been thinking about experimenting on people... I've already understood the efficacy by using a dog as a sorcery medium, see. That's why the next thing is to take data from people but..." (Julia)

Julia puts jimsonweed on my hand.

"Won't you try this jimsonweed for me in your next war? It would only be something like making it into a fine powder and scattering it so a curse could be applied, see." (Julia)

"Well, that's fine but..."

It would probably be more effective than poppy, am I correct?

Illusion magic seemed to hold the key in territorial dispute after all. There's no problem if it's just checking.

The joke is on us if the wind suddenly changes direction though.

Suddenly, a lavender flower jumps into my eyes.

It's about the same as Julia's hair color.

However, this flower's shape is unlike a lavender.

As I grab the flower to look at it, it gives off a sweet smell.

What could this...

"That, you see, is a new variety of a poisonous plant. It's something I recently got from

the Adernia Peninsula. I raised this because I heard people who eat this get poisoned. I intend to experiment on what would happen if I increased the amount of the plant. Will it become medicine? Will it become poison? Furthermore, will it become a narcotic?..... Don't you think it's exciting?" (Julia)

I don't think so.

"Hmmm. Am I strange? I get all fired up and excited whenever I do investigations like these." (Julia)

This isn't because of something like those things entering the body in very small amounts, right?

Please let it just be Julia being abnormal. I'm begging you please.

"Hey, won't you try it if a war breaks out? After that, I want you to teach me the difference in efficacy compared to poppy." Julia rapidly closes in on me.

"Well, okay. If it's just that."

Julia hands me the flower after I say so.

"Thank you. Let me hear the results from you personally." (Julia)

"You don't have to tell me." (Almis)

Julia comes closer to kiss me.

.....I receive it just like that without refusing.

She immediately separates from me.

"Good luck, okay?"

"I know."

I say my goodbye to Julia and return to the palace.



"Hey, Almis. You kissed with Julia, am I right?" (Tetra)

"...Sorry"

I apologize honestly.

However, how did she know? Women's intuition is amazing, huh.

"It's not like I'm angry. It's not like I lost anything." Tetra candidly says.

I've known Tetra for so long but... as I thought, she's a strange one. I don't understand her sometimes.

Isn't it normal to be angry at this?

If you won't get angry then I'll sneak around and do the same thing again and again, you know.

"If you and Julia get married then you'll be making babies either way so something like a kiss should be nothing. It's fine to give her a kiss or two too if you do decide not to marry her. I'm very generous after all." (Tetra)

I want you to be jealous even just a little. Didn't you get in the way a long time ago when me and Julia got a good mood going?

What turn of events is this.

"I've already gotten Almis' number one spot after all. From now on, no matter what happens, the fact that I'm wife no. 1 is set in stone." (Tetra)

In other words, she's already married me so she has the leeway.

It's that sort of thing, huh.

"By the way... right now, which side are you leaning on? Do you want to or not want to marry her?"

"I'm going with 6 against 4 but I wonder if that's big..."

My relationship with Regal DeBall got considerably worse because of this time's affair. If things continue as is, then it would become as King Rosyth said. I'll have to consider a future where I'll get purged after Regal becomes king.

No, that's just an excuse, huh.

While doing things like kissing with Julia and embracing each other, I, by all means, have come to want her.

Yes, it seems like I'm just looking for excuses, huh.

"I actually think that it would be good if you became king. Ron and the others said so too." (Tetra)

"I know. That's why I couldn't consult with them." (Almis)

Those guys will definitely not object. Rather, they'd probably greatly welcome it. They would also probably die gladly for the sake of my happiness.

That's why I couldn't ask them.

I don't want them to die after all.

Plus... there's something worrying me a little.

"If you become king, a lot of people would be saved. Is this reason not fine?" (Tetra)

"You're overestimating me. My arms are not that wide." (Almis)

I let out a sigh.

It will become the seventh month tomorrow.

There's four months left until the deadline Julia gave me... Until then...



"Lord Regal. You should punish Gilberto. If you don't we won't be able to instill discipline to the other retainers!!!" (Bermet)

Bermet raises his voice.

Regal deals with it.

"Wait wait, he got defeated just once. Can't we just overlook it this time?" (Regal)

"He fought the enemy with twice their soldiers but he still lost, you know? That battle

was something that he shouldn't have lost. This loss has caused a large part of the neutral faction to move to the Ars faction. Even within our faction, there's a lot who have switched and are thinking of switching. We cannot have him not take responsibility for this!!" (Bermet)

At present, it has become that a third of all the great clansmen are in the Ars Faction while the remaining two-thirds are in the DeBell faction.

For a long time, the Ars Faction wasn't very collected and was just composed of nothing but people who were once in the DeBell faction but wouldn't have hesitated to leave and people who are pretending to be Ars supporters but are actually neutral. However, with their faction's victory this time, their unity had solidified at once.

The war continues in the Adernia Peninsula and, to the great clansmen, their subordinate's worries are how they could protect their own interests.

Naturally, the fact that the Almis Ars Clan broke the law still exists. But that is not that big of a problem if compared to their strength in war.

Furthermore, the reason they broke the law was under the pretext of protecting oppressed peoples.

Compared to that, Regal DeBell oppressed the people and got defeated even though they had twice the forces.

If they had won then the fact that they had oppressed people would not have become a big deal but..... now that they've lost it's become a big problem.

At present, people voicing their doubts against Regal DeBell's succession to the throne are getting more vocal.

It's become a big problem for Regal who's aiming for the throne.

"However, Gilberto is my second cousin. Wouldn't it be fine to just forgive him this time?" (Regal)

Bermet clenches his fist tightly.

Regal is extremely generous to his relatives.

Regal will grant people important posts even if they don't have great accomplishments so long as they're relatives. If they made a big mistake, Regal wouldn't blame them.

Conversely, Regal is harsh against non-relatives, never giving them any important jobs. If they made even the smallest of mistakes then they'll immediately get punished.

Right now, the only person holding an important post with no blood-relation to Regal is Bermet. All of the retainers without blood-relation to Regal are all by Bermet's recommendation.

Because of this, the retainers don't show any ambition to obtain great achievements.

By all means, Bermet wants to cut off the influence of Regal's relatives before he becomes king.

This time the damage is great but, conversely making use of it ought to strengthen their camp.

Bermet, for this reason, vehemently blames Gilberto.

After Gilberto loses his standing, Bermet intends to replace him with a capable person who is not Regal's relative.

However, Regal is sticking up for Gilberto so it couldn't go well.

"In the first place, isn't there also problem with you, Lord Bermet, the one who made that kind of plan?"

A relative retainer utters so.

Voices of agreement to that declaration rise.

Certainly, Bermet's plan was a little dangerous and had a lot of demerits. However, had that plan not pushed through, Regal would, open and above board, end up breaking the law.

In addition to that, there's no mistaking that it won't be funny if they lose.

Therefore, Bermet is not at fault.

However, to Regal's relatives, those things don't matter.

"Well, well. Let's just divide the blame and call this one a draw." Regal declares so to soothe his relatives.

Just like that, Bermet also ended up taking some fault.

Regal didn't have bad intentions. He really did that just to soothe his relatives. He just ended up choosing the wrong words.

However, he did not notice the mistake, nor the fact the it was induced by his relatives.

Bermet breaths out a sigh from the bottom of his heart.

CHAPTER 55

WORRIES II

Just like that, time passed and it became the eleventh month.

The fort I entrusted to Ismere got finished and we managed to train the soldiers up to a useable level.

The ruined agricultural lands have finished recovering and about a third of the villages have begun using crop rotation system.

The remaining two-thirds were a little difficult to persuade but... once the results come out then they'll probably assent.

The paper mass production system and the salt mine equipment are both in order. We've begun mass production.

The Cretian merchants, including Ains-san, have been buying paper and salt in large amounts so the Ars' Territory's coffers are flush with money.

We won't seem to be having hardships even with the debt payments.

...although I do regret about the salt mines.

So then, the problem is... there's only three days remaining until the deadline.

"What do you think I should do?" (Almis)

"You're asking me that?" (Bartolo)

Bartolo makes a dubious face.

“Wouldn’t it be better to ask your own subordinates?” (Bartolo)

“If there was a possibility that I’d become king, those guys would, without fail, completely support it so... I can’t use them as reference, you know.” (Almis)

In any case, I know without asking.

Besides, those guys completely don’t understand why I’m worried about you guys getting hurt, don’t you agree.

Also, I have some reservations in consulting them.

That’s were Bartolo comes in.

I heard he seems to be a retainer knows a few information when I asked King Rosyth.

He seems to have abundant life experiences so I thought I might try asking him.

“I heard a lot about you from King Rosyth so I know some, okay? I’m in the Rosyth faction so support the Ars faction... however, well... I think you should decide according to your intentions.” (Bartolo)

I can’t decide with that, huh...

“If I recall correctly, you were worried that a war might break out, was it? Well, certainly the possibility of that is high but... it’s not like it’s certain that war would break out, am I right. If you do it skillfully, then war just might not break out.” (Bartolo)

Certainly.

It’s not like I had revelation that a war would break out.

In the end, it's still a question of possibility.

Whether I could make Regal DeBell agree depends on if I could skillfully make them powerless.

However, that is exceedingly hard to do, right?

Right now, the Ars Faction is made up of a third of the powerful clans.

In other words, the remaining two thirds will turn into enemies.

Furthermore, it's quite doubtful that those one third would reliably support me as an ally.

Moreover, the De Morgal Kingdom is not hiding their ambition to head south. That country would certainly take advantage of the chaos and come to invade.

"It's no good... I can't decide."

I hold my head.

"Well, it's something you wouldn't want to regret after all."

Bartolo stands up as if saying that there's nothing left to say anymore.



Deep within a huge forest.

In a place called the Forbidden Forest in the deepest parts of the Romano forest.

The fabled Griffon's territory.

There in the Griffon's den... inside that which the Griffon calls castle, I am((talking with the Griffon)).

"I see... In other words, you want to copulate with the bitch with the lavender colored breed called Julia. However, Julia is the daughter of the pack's alpha so to copulate you need to become the alpha. However, a lot of them wouldn't be able to stomach the newcomer becoming the alpha so there's a high possibility that conflict would arise from that. That's why you're worrying, right?" (Griffon)

"That's somewhat correct but..... could you please sugarcoat it just a little? What's up with copulate?... at the very least use something like marry or something. Also, the way you said it made it sound like I'm worrying over falling in love with a female dog or monkey..." (Almis)

Something like bitch, copulate, pack, and alpha... there are better ways to say them, right?

Something like woman, or hair color, or country, or king. See?

"This is the fault of 'Divine Protection of the Divine Word' 's translations. From the very beginning, both you humans and other animals are made from the same matter and carry a soul so I couldn't understand the necessity to expressly make distinction with words. Also, for me, dogs, monkeys, humans, all of them are just the same."

Well, from the point of view of a half-falcon half-lion beast treated as a god, it's probably all the same.

"You want to copulate with the bitch called Julia, right?" (Griffon)

"Well, although I'm bothered with how you said it... yes, that is correct." (Almis)

When I answer, the Griffon snorts from the nose.

"Then just do it. What's the problem with that?" (Griffon)

"I just said that a war might break out with that, right? There's a possibility that Ron

and the others could die, too.” (Almis)

The Griffon’s eyes opens wider. Somehow, it seems displeased.

“Ron and the others can decide for themselves whether they want to help you. You don’t need to take part in that. I can’t understand the reason why you’re worrying about the internal discords of your fellow pack animals. You should just fight and win, right? Or does it seem that you will lose?” (Griffon)

“No... I think I probably could have won from the very beginning but...” (Almis)

The Ars Territory’s population is 30,000. The Crown Territories are around 70,000. Combined, they are 100,000. The other clans’ territories’ population are around 70,000.

From the very start, I could have won.

However, a lot of people would have died.

“A long time ago, didn’t you say to me that humans who could kill a member of the same species without feeling anything about it was a deviant, right?” (Almis)

“Yes. I said that. Creatures called humans are creatures that live in packs. There would be a problem if a member of a pack kills one of his comrades and not bear feelings of guilt. In that case, it would become difficult to protect the laws in that pack. The deviant cannot live in the pack. Living after that would be fatal for a human. However, you are different.” (Griffon)

“...What is different?” (Almis)

The Griffon speaks.

“You are a leader. You impose the law. You are not a member of a pack, rather you are an existence that moves it. You are an existence exempted from the rules of the pack. Therefore, it doesn’t matter if you are a deviance. Rather, you should be a deviant. If not, you would not be able to protect the pack from outside enemies. You have become a leader so should leave behind the biggest effect on the pack. To do that, you must not be worried about any kind of sacrifice. Do you understand?” (Griffon)

“.....”

The Griffon continues to add:

“Casualty? What’s the problem there? They are just other people with no relation to you. Besides, you have killed to stay alive and protect the children up to know, am I right? After such a long time, hasn’t that become irrelevant?”

“I think we cannot talk of my desires and the problem of taking away life at the same level...”

“They’re just the same. The same as killing people.”

The Griffon laughs scornfully. He looks at me straight in the eye.

“Listen. Suppose, you have something that you must not do, then it should be something you can’t do in the first place. However, God has given us the choice to kill another of the same species for the sake of our own desires. Thus, it’s fine if you do so. After taking over a pack, lions kill the child of the old leader. Fish and the like forget about their children and end up eating the very child they have given birth to. And because of those, has heaven given them punishment? Isn’t there none? Thus, it’s fine if you do so.” (Griffon)

The Griffon speaks indifferently.

“We have the privilege to do whatever we want..... We are given freedom. We have the freedom to rebel against irrationality before our eyes. We also have the freedom to accept it. This world (plaything) exists for your sake. That’s why you should just do as you like. It’s fine to play humbly. It’s also fine to play gaudily. You also have the choice to destroy it with your own hands.” (Griffon)

The Griffon looks at me persuasively.

“Don’t be afraid. Be prepared. Nobody has the right to admonish you. The only things this world has are winners and losers. You can just keep on winning. You can just do as you like. I did as I like. A very long time ago, I did things like pushing off a cow over the cliffs just for fun, blowing off a mountain, and killing and eating humans. What’s wrong with that? Listen, there’s no duty in strength. What’s there is only privilege. Pierce your own ego. If you want a woman, just take her away. If you want territory just take it. If you want money get it. If you want peace, seize it. What’s wrong is not being able to choose a strong person as a patron and not being able to protect your own things with your own power.” (Griffon)

The Griffon's sermon won't end.

"A human's life is much shorter than mine. There's no time to start over. That's why you should do things you won't regret. You would regret dragging unrelated people with you for just a moment but you would regret letting go of the bitch until you die."
(Griffon)

"That's..." (Almis)

Certainly, I don't want that.

Just thinking about Julia getting taken away by Regal DeBell makes me want to vomit.

"Let's put the alpha's social status and copulating with the bitch on the left side of the balance scale. What you should put on the left side of the weighing scale are not the lives of un-related humans. You shall choose between the regret of letting the bitch get taken away or the regret getting unrelated people dragged into the matter and killed. Now, which side do you lean on? Well, it would seem that you have finally arrived at your answer." (Griffon)

"....."

I close my eyes and think.

I remember Julia's figure.

Her smile, her body. Our fun times together. All of them are things I don't want to part with.

And then, I open my eyes.

"Thank you very much, Griffon-sama. I've come to a conclusion. I'll be off." (Almis)

“Yes. Go forth. Make sure you won’t regret it.” (Griffon)

I ran.

It will take about a day to leave the Griffon’s territory.

I’ll barely make it to King Rosyth’s palace if I rode a horse after coming out of the forest.

I must make haste.

“You barely made it, huh. So, have you made your decision?” (Rosyth)

King Rosyth hosts me even though it’s midnight. He probably wants to hear my response already.

On his left side is Raymond, and on his right side is Julia.

“First. I apologize for making you wait five months for my answer. I humbly apologize. And, thank you very much for giving me the honor of your time. In addition to that, I understand that this might be a shameless request but...”

I bow deeply to King Rosyth.

“Please give me Princess Julia.”

Then I immediately face Julia.

Julia widens her eyes. She puts her hands over her mouth in surprise.

“Julia, I’ll make you mine. You won’t mind, right?” (Almis)

“Yes!!” (Julia)

Julia jumps to embrace me.

I receive her and the force takes me down.

This girl, she’s quite heavy, huh.

“Almis!!!” (Julia)

Julia tries to kiss me with her rosy lips but I hold her back with my hand.

“Oi, let’s leave that for later...”

We’re being watched by King Rosyth and Sir Raymond, see.

Julia finally realizes the situation and separates from me immediately. She’s completely red in the face.

“It’s fine to continue, you know?”

“We’ll watch over you, see.”

The two say while grinning.

These two really are brothers. Both have a bad personality.



I get up and sit on the bed.

King Rosyth gets serious after seeing me make a serious face.

“Let me hear your second conclusion. If I refuse, what will you do?”

“I’ll kidnap Julia by force. After that, I’ll ally with King De Morgal to take down this country.” (Almis)

King Rosyth’s face twitches to my serious reply while Julia blushes further.

“That was a joke but it was good that I didn’t say I refuse. Then the next item, Can you tell me the reason why you suddenly changed your mind?” (Rosyth)

“The reason is... No, I wanted Julia from the start. That’s why it’s fine even if I become king. Also regarding kingship... I started to think becoming one might not be such a bad idea after all. If I had the authority called kingship then I’ll be able to save a lot of people. I’ll also be able to reward Ron and the others. However,... I didn’t have the resolve.”

I put together various reasons. Like people will die and my companions would get hurt.

However, that was wrong. I was just scared. Of the excessively huge power.

Since I became a great clansman, the way I saw people around me changed. The me right now can kill a people with just a stroke of my hand. Just like that Regal DeBell.

If I become king, I’ll get power even greater than that. I became scared that because of that I’ll change.

I was just scared.

In a word, I was just an indecisive coward lacking resolve. Honestly, Regal DeBell might have been less objectionable than me.

Furthermore, I was afraid of the Divine Protection of the Great King.

I couldn't help but worry that that thing might change something inside of me and repaint me.

But I can't keep on running away forever right?

If I kept this up, then I would surely regret it. That's why I'll have to face this power, and this divine protection and make my decision.

I'll take the step to achieve that and get Julia. I'll use that power for my sake only.

To get Julia, I'll massacre everyone that stands with the DeBell Clan.

This is where I draw the line.

I'll stop being scared anymore and wield that power.

At this rate, my comrades, including Tetra, might all be taken away by that piece of crap.

That's why I'll get him before he gets me.

Then I'll show him how to manage power.

"Well, you've really thought this through huh. So, who was the person who pushed you to make this final step?"

"It's not a person."

"It's the Griffon, huh. Well, fine. I'm happy you've decided to become king. I'll take this opportunity to ask but... what do you want to do when you've become king?"

What I want to do.

It's not like I hate luxury but it's not like I love it too. For women, I'm happy with just Tetra and Julia.

Power, however...

"How about unifying the Adernia Peninsula?" (Almis)

You have to take peace by force. You told me that, right Griffon-sama?

"Alright. The problem is the timing of the announcement, wedding, and the enthronement. Do you have a date in mind?" (Rosyth)

"It's convenient to finish everything at once, yes? Let's end this in two days." (Almis)

Usually, the wedding ceremony is done several months after the announcement. The great clansmen too would need some time to prepare for their presents, after all.

Well, Tetra and I got it over with immediately after the inheritance battle with King Ferrum, however.

"Regal DeBell would probably have no time to mobilize his troops in two days. After the enthronement, we should just immediately assemble the army and go after and destroy all the great clansmen who didn't attend the enthronement ceremony. How about it?"

"Well, that's pretty much it. If I had to change anything, it would be that we should mobilize the soldiers right before the announcement."

It'll probably be a bloody wedding.

"The time period is as soon as possible, yes? As for me, I want to hand over the throne to you while I'm still alive. I won't be able to die without peace of mind after all. That will also give you peace of mind, yes?" (Rosyth)

"I agree King Rosyth. It's more convenient when father-in-law is still alive. However, regarding the time period..." (Almis)

"It'll be hard without having achievements? Is that what you want to say?" (Rosyth)

I nod.

I haven't made any visible achievements since I became a lord.

There's a problem in succeeding to the throne at this stage. If possible, I want to become king after I obtain a great achievement.

"Also, I want to quickly put the country back in order after immediately suppressing the rebellion. In order to do that... I think it's necessary to remove all the members of the DeBell Faction in one clean sweep. That's why I think we should do it after some maneuvering." (Almis)

I don't have the courtesy to give them battle after succeeding the throne. It's fine to just grab victory from the start.

"I see. I too am also worrying a little about your achievements... I actually have a suggestion, would you like to hear it?" (Rosyth)

"What would that be?" (Almis)

"The De Morgal Kingdom will attack this country before long. I'll grant you the right to command of the whole army so beat them." (Rosyth)

That's a great idea... Well, that's the best approach when speaking of creating achievements but...

Isn't the difficulty level a little high?

"We anticipate their army would number around 15,000 front and back. Our country can mobilize 4,000 to 5,000." (Rosyth)

"I don't remember seeing that number mobilized during the time of King Ferrums so... will we be alright?" (Almis)

At that time, the diplomatic maneuvering was horrible.

There's a significant chance that we'll get diplomatically maneuvered this time too. The DeBell Faction would probably not lend their military power, am I right? All the more, if I become supreme commander of the army.

"There won't be problems. If our country gets invaded by the De Morgal Kingdom, then next in line would be the Eville Kingdom and the Belvedere Kingdom. We secured promises that we won't get attacked by both countries. Furthermore, this time, we know that the enemy is coming so we could mobilize easily. I can gather about 5,000 in the territories I directly control. You have an 800 strong standing army, yes? We have to conscript the other 1200." (Rosyth)

1200, huh...

If you ask whether we could, then yes, we can.

Besides, there's no reason we couldn't put together military recruits and conscripts and we haven't said so either.

We would probably be able to gather provisions and equipment without much opposition if we declared they be arranged here.

"With this, it's become 7,000. We can expect around 500 from the great clansmen. In other words, we'll have 7,500. It might be tough but... we'll have to make do. Are you confident we can do this?" (Rosyth)

“...That depends upon the tactics, yes? By the way, how much cavalry does father-in-law have? I have a hundred.” (Almis)

“There was a time when we wanted to organize one. However, we weren’t able to train that much numbers. It was easier to make 300 hoplites than 100 cavalry after all since the costs would pile up. For now, we have around 50 cavalry for patrolling the territory.” (Rosyth)

Hmmm... That’s too little. This is hard, huh. Although this would depend on whether the enemy would have cavalry.

“The De Morgal Kingdom borders the Rozel Kingdom. The Rozel Kingdom is a Gallic kingdom. They have cavalry in a considerable scale. So in order to oppose that, King De Morgal will probably leave behind his cavalry within his territory.” (Rosyth)

In other words, he’ll only bring along a few of them and if we’re lucky maybe none at all.

I wonder if the plan could now stand with that.

“For the meantime, let’s postpone this talk.” (Almis)

“I agree. The problem now is maneuvering. What do you intend to do?” (Rosyth)

I explain the maneuvering against Regal DeBell.

A smile floats on the face of King Rosyth.

“I see. You’re quite the devil yourself, huh.” (Rosyth)

“I haven’t decided on a specific method, okay? It’s absolutely necessary for my faction to grow. As for that...” (Almis)

“Naturally, I’ll cooperate with you. We’ll have to limit the people who knows this operation to make you king. The only people who shall know this would be our Rosyth Clansmen, that shall play a central part in this operation, the clansmen that we could

fully trust like Bartolo. Don't tell operation this to anyone. Be careful even of your subordinates." (Rosyth)

We'll be at a disadvantage if information leaks out after all...

It can't be helped.

"Uhm... I know where talking about the maneuvers but... there's one thing I absolutely need to tell you."

Julia raises her hands.

Naturally, I concentrate my gaze to Julia who's sticking to my arm right now."

Somehow it kind of feels like I'm being watched too.

"Um... it's about the divine protection but... for the meantime, why don't you tell us yours Almis?" (Julia)

"That's fine. Or should I say I shall speak of it." (Almis)

I explain my divine protection to Rosyth and Raymond.

The two show a surprised expression.

"Divine protection huh... the ones I've seen, including Julia's have become 5 cases, huh." (Rosyth)

"At any rate, you hold quite the useful divine protection." (Raymond)

I feel awkward when you tell me that.

In any case, it's efficacy have been horribly dissed by Griffon-sama, after all.

“Then, this is what I wanted to say, see... actually...”

Julia shows a little troubled expression.

“Regal DeBell also holds the Divine Protection of the Great King, you see...” (Julia)

Eh?

Really?

CHAPTER 56

FAIRIES

“To say the least, I just can’t imagine seeing that man having the caliber of “Great King” but... are you absolutely sure you’re correct?” (Rosyth)

King Rosyth just said something quite mean. Although, I do agree with him.

Is the “Divine Protection of the Great King” actually not that rare?

It’s not just me who has it? Or should I say, you could actually obtain such thing?

Now, that feels kind of depressing huh.

“Yes. My ‘Divine Protection of Perception’ is quite accurate after all. It’s definitely the same as Almis’ ability..... that of raising the physical abilities depending on the number of people who believe in you as a leader. It also raises the physical abilities of people who trust you and have high loyalty to you as a ripple effect. They’re the same, yes?” (Julia)

(TLN: Pengu Trans translated 看破の加護 as DP of Perception. While I lean on the side of Clairvoyance, (or more preferably ‘the Diving Protection of Seeing Through Shit’ lol), I’ll just use their term.)

“Does that mean that Regal DeBell is actually a big shot without us knowing it?” (Almis)

If that really were the case, then I’ll be so disillusioned.

“Hmmm, I wonder. At the very least, the people of the DeBell territory ((do consider, or should I say)) are afraid of him as their leader. Look, didn’t he just boast that he

killed a bear about three years ago?"

I see, it's enough that they consider you as their leader. It's not related at all to the person's caliber, huh.

Well, the people of a population probably don't know the character of their leader anyway.

It's only natural.

"Nevertheless, why does a person like Regal DeBell have such a divine protection?..." (Almis)

"Beats me. Fairies are whimsical creatures after all." (Julia)

Fairies?

"Hey, Julia. When you said fairies... did you mean the mischievous fairies?" (Almis)

In the Adernia Peninsula, fairies exist in folklore. They say fairies are mischievous and do things like pulling pranks on people.

If you're having either an unusually lucky or unlucky day, they say it's the work of fairies

If it suddenly rained, it's because of the fairies.

Those kind of things.

"Right, right. I looked up a lot of things about them and there was that kind of theory. The evidence is laughter. Haven't you heard them? Specifically, children's laughter. ((You'll hear them)) by the time you've been given a divine protection..." (Julia)

Children's laughter, huh.

I don't know. That might possibly be true, however...

It's been so many years ago when I noticed I had the Divine Protection. I've probably forgotten about that.

"Is that so? Almis doesn't know, huh. I've heard them many times, you know. I could already hear them a little when we first met, you know. Maybe it depends upon the person whether if they could hear them. Well, anyway, I think the fairies' true form is that of children. When you speak of fairies, you kind of think of a childish impression, after all." (Julia)

In other words, they only call them fairies as a matter of convenience.

Now that you said it, didn't Griffon-sama often spoke of "those brats".

Well, it's certain that it's a child-like existence.

"Weren't there a lot of particularly nasty episodes concerning fairies?"

"Certainly... there were things like that."

There were as many episodes concerning fairies as the number of stars in the sky. All of them about fairies pulling pranks on people.

These episodes can be classified into four types.

Those warm and fluffy stories.

Those moral lesson-like stories where the person gets deceived and loses everything but becomes aware of the importance of their bonds with family.

Also, those stories where people go through terrible hardships.

And the last one... stories where people die because of the fairy's mischief.

Let's give one concrete example.



A long time ago, there was a man.

This man hopelessly fell in love with his childhood friend from the village. However, his childhood friend ended up getting married to the village chief's son.

He was devastated.

And then, a fairy appeared in his dream and said:

'Tomorrow, go deep inside the forest at night and shoot the tree growing at the top of the mountain as the soon as the sun rises.'

In the beginning the man ignored this, but the dreams kept coming every day.

One time, the man finally did as the fairy instructed.

The man shoots at the tree at sunrise.

At the same time, a rabbit jumps out and get hits by the arrow.

Since then, the man kept following the fairy's instructions.

Because of this, the man becomes wealthy and gets popular too.

However, the only one in his heart is his childhood friend.

One day, the fairy tells him:

'Your childhood friend was threatened to become the wife of the village chief's son. You should kill the village chief's son. After that, you should just run away. There are

gold coins buried under the grape tree at the back of your house. With that money, you could run away.'

The man did as the fairy told him. He killed the village chief's son. The village chief and his wife witnessed this, so he killed them too. He then proposed to his childhood friend that they elope.

However, his childhood friend resisted.

The two argued when suddenly the childhood friend gets stabbed by a knife and dies.

He escapes in the confusion and returns to his home to dig up what's under the grape tree.

There he finds a sack.

However, what he found inside were not gold coins...

but cow feces.



The story ends there.

In a word, it's a story with a moral lesson. That in this world, there are a lot of things that are too good to be true so don't get deceived. However...

Was it really necessary for it to get that horrible?

And what's really scary here is that there's nothing in it for the fairy that appeared in the story.

In other words, fairies, just as a prank, get people to kill other people.

“I really don’t get what fairies are thinking. I was somehow well liked by them too.”
(Julia)

Which reminds me, this person has a lot of divine protections, huh.

“It’s probably fine to not be that cautious of that Regal’s divine protection, okay? Almis’ divine protection is more than a match for him. You should also just ignore about the fairies for now. In the first place, it’s just a hypothesis, right?” (Rosyth)

We stop at King Rosyth’s suggestion.

We’ve gone off topic, huh.

“Then, I’ll be going home for now. Let’s talk about the strategy next time when we have Bartolo with us.” (Almis)

“Yes. Let’s do that. Then come here three days later. Remember to keep this a secret, okay?” (Rosyth)

I salute King Rosyth and leave the room.

However, Julia stops me.

“Wait! Take me with you.” (Julia)

“N? Wouldn’t that be a problem?” (Almis)

Even if we tried to hide it, it’ll immediately be known if Julia disappears from the palace. It’ll cause an uproar, right?

“I know, but... I want to have a talk with Tetra, so...” (Julia)

Julia looks at King Rosyth.

“Just do as you like. I’ll say something like ‘Julia is away from the palace for a special ceremony. The location is a royal family secret so I cannot disclose it.’” (Rosyth)

In other words, I could take her with me.

“Jeez... Then can I borrow a carriage, King Rosyth?” (Almis)

“Yes. Since it’ll probably cause a misunderstanding if the two of you get seen riding on a single horse together. Also...” (Rosyth)

King Rosyth cautions me.

“While it’s fine for you to conduct some maneuvering, do not yet fully antagonize Regal DeBell. At the very least, wait up until the end of our war with King De Morgal. We’ll put in order all the preparations for the civil war so don’t carelessly fall victim to provocation. Well, come to think of it, we were saved by that time you humbled yourself into settling out of court with them. If the two of you had completely gone to war at that time, then this country wouldn’t exist today.” (Rosyth)

“I know. I’ll keep my head down, okay? For the mean time, I intend to continue as such.” (Almis)

Civil war would be dreadful. No matter who wins, all that will be left are minuses.

Therefore, we’d have to end this in an instant. Until then, I’ll have to trouble myself with keeping Regal on the dark.



“Okay. We’ve arrived but... Julia, wear this sack for the mean time. “

I make Julia wear the sack on her head.

With this, we won't be found out.

I hold Julia's hand and carefully help her get down from the horse.

We didn't have the time to open up the part near the eye so she shouldn't be able to see anything.

"Ah, Almis-san! Where have you been? Tetra's been worried abo... eh, Julia-san?"

We got found out!?

"Well, her hair's sticking out, you know..."

Ah, crap. Now that you mentioned it, the only girl with lavender-colored hair here is probably Julia.

That said, we don't have a sack big enough to hide all of Julia's hair so...

"Why is Julia-san here?"

"Let's talk about that later. For the meantime, let's get inside the mansion." (Almis)

The servants in the palace, for the most part, haven't seen Julia before so they probably won't know it's her just by seeing her hair.

That said, I'm just making sure.

We have to move quickly.

I'll have to get her inside the mansion without getting seen.

"That's how it is so stay still for me, okay?" (Almis)

"Hey, wha! Wait..." (Julia)

I carry Julia and run with all my strength.

"You kinda look like you're kidnapping someone right now, you know."

"Shut up" (Almis)



"Julia. I'm very angry right now." (Tetra)

Tetra declares to signal the start of the two's meeting.

I've known Tetra for so long now but this girl's expressions are quite hard to understand.

Although she said she's angry, her expression right now is not that much different from her normal one.

That said, if you look closely you can see that her eyebrows are moving a little.

It's a peculiar trait of Tetra when she's angry.

It's about 7/10 on the scale, huh.

However, didn't Tetra say that it's fine for Julia to become my second wife?

That's the reason I took Julia in.

"I I'm sorry....." (Julia)

Julia apologizes looking like she's about to curl herself up.

Tetra stares hard at Julia and says:

"You just said sorry, right? What would that sorry be for?" (Tetra)

"E? That's..... That's for snatching away Almis and snatching away the position of queen consort but..." (Julia)

"It's not like I'm angry about that. I'm not that interested in worldly social status."
(Tetra)

Then what are you angry about, this girl...

"You didn't consult with me even once. If you did that, then we could have thought about how to force Almis together. Besides, if I was against it then I would've flat out refused from the start." (Tetra)

"Uuu... It's just as you said. I'm sorry....." (Julia)

Julia bows her head to Tetra and apologizes.

Tetra smiles.

“Good. I forgive you.”

Well, I guess it's settled.

Great.

“But is it really alright?” (Julia)

“Yes. That's because I'm Almis' No.1 after all. No matter what happens, it's set in stone that I was the one who Almis married first. Besides, what's important is love. To hell with social status.... Well, it couldn't be helped if you're bothered about it.” (Tetra)

“Hey! What's up with that? You're making it sound like I wanted to be the queen consort so it couldn't be helped!!!” (Julia)

I don't know what the hell happened but it looks like it's become serious again.

For the meantime, I guess I should stop them, huh.

“You two. Don't fight because of me... Ouch! Don't hit me with your staff!” (Almis)

Tetra keeps hitting my head with her staff.

Tetra's staff has those wooden disks bound together so it's quite heavy but... this is too heavy for a wooden staff!”

“Oi, you put a metal rod inside didn't you!” (Almis)

“Nope~, The correct answer is...” (Tetra)

Tetra grabs the pointed tip of the wand. She unscrews it and pulls.

It's a black luster sword.

“It's a Swordstick. Isn't it cool?”

“I agree that it's cool but, don't hit me with that. If you got careless, you could kill me...”
(Almis)

“Hey, Tetra. Can you also make me one?” (Julia)

Thus, although the situation has changed, we've returned to our former relations.



I call together my trusted members.

Ron, Roswald, Gram, Soyon, Lulu, Yal, Bolus.

These seven people.

It's not that I don't trust the others not included here.

It's just that you increase the possibility of leaking information the more you increase the people who know.

Because the possibility of getting tortured to be made to talk is real enough, I can't speak about this to a lot of people.

Although I do feel bad about it...

In one line starting from the right, Tetra, me, and Julia sit in front of them.

All of their gazes fall at Julia.

They've probably noticed it to a certain extent huh.

"I'll get straight to the point. It's been decided that I'll be marrying Julia."

I could sense the tension in everyone.

Everyone falls silent.

Ron becomes the first one to speak.

".....That means Leader will... have to become King, am I right?" (Ron)

"Yes, it's become like that."

Everyone exchanges glances.

""HOORAY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Ron, Roswald, Gram, Soyon, and Lulu put their hands together and shouts happily.

Yal and Bolus, too, are smiling.

"I was so worried!! Because I heard that Julia might have had to marry that guy Regal..... moreover, Almis-san looked so gloomy lately, too! I've never felt so relieved."
(Soyon)

Soyon grins while giving us her blessing.

I see... It seems I looked so gloomy huh.

I'm sorry I made you worry guys...

"However, that means we'll finally cross swords with the DeBell Clan, am I right?"

"Yes. That's correct. That's why I'll be imposing on everyone. This is... so to speak, because of my and Julia's love. I really feel bad dragging everyone into this. I'm sorry. However... please support us!! (Almis)

As I say so, the seven smile broadly.

"Isn't it time for Almis to finally wield us for his convenience? You're so reserved. You don't have to ask all of those one by one, you know!" (Gram)

Roswald declares in addition to Gram.

"We had to get along with the DeBell Clan before so ((I held back)). But if it's become like this, then at that time, should I have just stabbed that ((Gilberto)) with my spear?" (Roswald)

Roswald shows a somewhat regretful expression.

No, that was a wise decision, you know.

If it became an all-out war then the neighboring countries would've come together to intervene and I would never be able to succeed the throne.

"Almis-sama. Congratulations. However, please let me confirm one thing. What would happen to Tetra-sama?" (Bolus)

Bolus looks straight at me.

Naturally, it's something that's bothering him, huh.

I embrace Tetra while looking straight at Bolus.

"Tetra will remain as my wife. Though she won't become queen consort... by no means would I make light of her, I promise you that." (Almis)

"Is that so... I asked something awkward. I apologize." (Bolus)

Bolus bows deeply.

When the excitement died down, Yal opens his mouth.

"However, Lord Almis. Have you estimated the opposition against your enthronement by the clans aside from the DeBell Clan? Also, how shall we deal with the DeBell Clan? (Yal)

"Naturally, I've thought about it. First, concerning the opposition by non-DeBell factions... the possibility of the De Morgal Kingdom invading us before long is high. When that happens, I'll be appointed as the supreme commander. There, I should be able to obtain a great achievement. Furthermore, concerning dealing with the DeBell Clan, I think we should try to destroy them from within." (Almis)

"From within, is it?" (Yal)

"Yes." (Almis)

The DeBell faction is large.

If we fought squarely, it will probably become a very bloody battle.

Though I don't think we'll lose, it will be a tough battle.

The people who are supporting me are Tetra's relatives..... in other words, the Ars Clan's relatives.

However, the Ars Clan had a time where it had come to an end for some time so they've lost a lot of influence during those years.

Because the opposing DeBell faction is quite collected by themselves, they've flexed their muscle to try to bury the retreating Ars faction.

Even though the Ars clan managed to make a comeback when I appeared, we're still quite far off.

The ones who hold the key are not the Ars clan's relatives but the clansmen who are not relatives of the DeBell clan. However... rather than someone like me of a doubtful origin, they probably lean towards the DeBell clan.

Even those who would support me in a normal political dispute, would certainly choose the weather when I've become to succeed the throne.

That's why, as much as possible, in order to bring in an advantage, we have to drive a wedge into the DeBell Clan's core.

"I heard about this from King Rosyth but... there seems to be two factions within the DeBell Faction. The first is the disadvantaged group of retainers led by Regal's trusted confidant and subordinate Bermet. The second is the group of DeBell relatives headed by Gilberto. The former group is full of capable people but their social status, except for Bermet, tend to be low. The latter group, because they were chosen by their lineage, though lacking in capable people, are lucky in obtaining the good positions. Thus, it seems that Regal has a tendency to rely on relatives." (Almis)

It's not bad to reinforce your retainers with relatives.

There's nothing you can trust more than your relatives after all, plus your unity is firm.

I, too, fill my close associates with Ron and the others.

However, there is a problem with installing and using only relatives to responsible positions.

Relatives would not be careful in making and shrugging off big mistakes because they can play the family card, and they would just rest on their laurels.

The man Ron, Roswald, and Soyon beat – Gilberto is a good example. Normally, if you had failed that miserably, at the very least, a demotion is in order. However, that guy got away with it with just a week's house arrest.

This is a very delightful thing. There's nothing better than having an enemy full of incompetents.

However, there's one person that's a cause for concern.

That man called Bermet.

Bermet, as the rumors say, seems to be a very capable old man. By all means, it was all because of him that the DeBell Clan had managed to expand to such power.

Certainly, I can feel some sort of drive from that old man.

It seems it was Bermet who made the horrible plan to casually slaughter the refugees before our eyes.

Honestly speaking, you really can't tell ability with just that.

I know too little about that man.

However, I know that he's very dangerous.

If I were able to remove that Bermet, then I'll be able to split the DeBell clan right in half.

"That's how it is but..... does anyone have a great idea?" (Almis)

When I proposed such, everyone fell silent.

One thing or another, they seem to have a deep acknowledgement of Bermet.

Taking them down won't be an easy task.

"For the time being, I have a strategy." The one who spoke up was Yal.

Oi, are you serious?

"Regal DeBell won't trust anyone except his relatives. In other words, he's quite a distrustful person, yes? We'll use that against him. It's just that... this plan would some preparation and quite a sum of money." (Yal)

"I don't mind. This strategy is?" (Almis)

Yal explains his strategy.

CHAPTER 57

CAVALRY I

“Alright, let’s start the meeting. How are we going to drive back King De Morgal’s army?”

Julia declares to the assembled clansmen.

These are people who already know and have acknowledged that I will succeed as King.

Julia presides over the meeting as King Rosyth’s health has suddenly turned for the worse.

I brought along Bolus and Tetra.

Although I wanted to bring along Ron and the others as well, I couldn’t due to problems concerning their social status.

“The enemy is 15,000 strong. Let us proceed with the assumption that ours would be 7,500 strong. Does anyone have an opinion?” (Julia)

The clansmen look at a map that is spread before Julia. Upon this map, chess pieces are assembled. *(TLN: Actually, Shogi pieces but hey, it’s like chess anyway.)*

A clansman takes the king piece of the color representing our Rosyth Kingdom’s side and places it upon Fort Terrier, the fort I had recently completed in the border between the Ars and the De Morgal Kingdom.

“As I thought, don’t you think the best way to go about this is to fight a siege using a small defending force? We can barricade ourselves in the fort enabling us to take on up to three times our own forces. With this, we can force our enemy to withdraw.” (Clansman)

This is proposed by a clansman from the Ordovices Clan.

The Ordovices are a branch of the Ars clan. They also have marriage ties with the Rosyth Clan.

Their territory borders the Belvedere Kingdom.

Although they never had a war even once with the Belvedere Kingdom, they did nevertheless have several skirmishes making them very experienced with war.

“Certainly, we won’t lose if it’s a siege even with small numbers. However, we also won’t win. Though I do agree that the enemy would not prolong a battle so they will withdraw if it’s to the extent of a skirmish... However, this time, King De Morgal is determined to head south. I don’t think he will withdraw.” (Bartolo)

“Then it comes down to a field battle, yes?... Will we hit them with Lord Bartolo’s echelon formation?”

The one who asks so is a clansman from the Perm Clan.

The Perm Clan also has familial relations with the Ars Clan.

The clan borders the DeBell territory so they would be valuable when the civil war breaks out. I hear that, although their territory is small, their economy is quite strong because of the various rock salt mines that they have.

However, they don’t have much experience in war.

“The echelon formation cannot be used without extensive practice. We were able to manage with my army and King Rosyth’s army... however, this time...” (Bartolo)

This time, although we have greater numbers, it’s hard to say that the army could work together smoothly. The echelon formation would probably be difficult to pull off.

“The enemy is a big army numbering over 10,000. Therefore, their food consumption would be rapid. They will immediately exhaust the rations they would bring. Furthermore, because the enemy needs to bring siege equipment, they won’t be able to bring much materials. In other words, they would have to source the rations from the locality after exhausting what they’ve brought. We will pull them into our territory while employing scorch earth tactics. We will wait until they exhaust their resources and then we will cut their supply lines using hidden soldiers.” (Tetra)

Tetra gives off quite a tangible strategy. However, that strategy will scorch our interior, huh.

Even though the land had just recovered, they will have to be devastated again, huh.

“With that, wouldn’t the soldiers from the Ars Territory be demoralized?”

Julia points out the plan's biggest weakness.

With the scorched earth policy, we would have to burn fields and throw poison or dust into the wells.

If one is unlucky that as a result of possibly being in charge of one's village..... then morale will greatly fall.

"Almis, what do you think?"

You'll push this on to me huh... Well, I am the supreme commander so I guess it's only natural.

Hmmm... my opinion, huh.

I think it's best we go for the field battle but if you consider the difference in number then it's impossible.

On the other hand, we will be able to fight effectively in a siege but it's just a strategy for buying time.

We won't have reinforcements, huh...

N? Now that I think about it...

"Certainly, the De Morgal Kingdom and the Gillbed Kingdom had signed a cease-fire agreement. However, that agreement doesn't mention anything about the Fardam Kingdom and Rozel Kingdom, yes?... How about we ally ourselves with those two countries?"

If they got attacked in a pincer, even they would have to withdraw, right? With this, we'll have to go with the siege to buy time.

"King De Morgal left behind quite a number of soldiers so I don't think they will withdraw from our country even if we attacked them from the front and back. Besides, the Rozel Kingdom and the Fardam Kingdom are at war right now."

This ain't gonna work, huh.

As for the other plans...

“Honestly, I think cutting off their supply route is a great idea. We could probably win this just by upsetting their weakness in morale.” (Bartolo)

Bartolo declares.

I also think it's not a bad idea.

It's just like that huh. It's problematic because we have to apply the scorched earth on our territory. Can't we do it to the enemy's territory?

N? I see... If we do it in the enemy's territory then it won't be a problem at all.

“Then how about this way?”

I tell them about my plan.

The clansmen open their eyes wide in surprise.

“That would incur the curs... no, If it's you then we won't have to worry about that, huh. I think a surprise attack would be enough to succeed.” (Raymond)

Raymond agrees with my plan.

“I see. As for the next phase, after luring them into pursuit, we will attack them from the front and back in a pincer. Not bad. However, we might get hurt if we do this sloppily.” (Bartolo)

Bartolo agrees while also saying the plan's faults.

Well, yeah.

This plan's greatest barrier is the mobility.

“I think we can do this with the cavalry's mobility. Although we could also do this with Velites (light infantry)..... the De Morgal Kingdom has cavalry. The velites would be helpless against an attack by cavalry dispatched from the center. If we use cavalry, then we can stir them up completely.”

The problem is I only have 100 cavalry. If I remember correctly, King Rosyth only has

50.

That's too little.

"How many does everyone have?" (Almis)

I ask the clansmen how many cavalry they have.

The total? 50.

In other words, the Rosyth Kingdom has 200 cavalry in total.

As expected, that's too little.

In the first place, horse riding is a special skill so you couldn't gather people with that skill in large numbers. Therefore, cavalry couldn't become the main force in war.

Although you could also use them for messaging and scouting, this world has falcons which can do those jobs better.

What the horse can do in several hours, the falcon can do immediately.

The value of horses, therefore, are lower.

"At the very least, we'll want 200 more. We can't rest easy otherwise."

The Ordovices clansman says so.

"Then, what do you say about hiring Alva people?"

Julia proposes.

Who are those Alva people?

"Eh... Alva people are... Aren't they barbarians?"

The Perm clansman makes a sour face.

"We don't want to get involved with those kind of people, yes?"

The Ordovices clansman, too, make a disagreeable face.

I said who the hell are those Alva people?

Somebody please explain!

“The Alva people are a flat-faced clan who spread out to Germanis, Gaul, and the Adernia peninsula a very long time ago... 500 years, if I recall correctly. They live across the mountains to the east of the Rosyth Kingdom. Right now, they have completely assimilated with Adernians.” (Tetra)

According to Tetra:

Apparently, those flat-faced clan came and invaded the Adernia Peninsula with their horses and subjugated approximately the whole area 500 years ago. They made an empire that covered Germanis, Gaul, and the Adernia Peninsula.

However, after their great king died, the flat-faced clan broke up into several competing clans and families.

At the same time, taking advantage of the revolting Adernians, the expanding Cretians and Povenians drove them out.

After that, the flat-faced tribe also couldn't maintain their control over Germanis and Gaul so they ended up retreating to the east.

Apparently, they were the ones who brought horse-riding to the west.

However, not all of them joined the retreat. A part of them detached from the main force and settled around the Alva mountain range to the east of the Rosyth Kingdom. They assimilated with the Adernians and became known as the Alva people.

“The Alva area is a dry region in the middle of the Adernia Peninsula that receives very little rain. Originally, livestock farming was popular in the area. That's why the flat-faced tribe seemed to have an easy time assimilating.” (Tetra)

I see. It's to the east of a mountain range so it rains very little, huh.

Although this world doesn't seem to be particularly aware of the existence of westerlies so I can't confirm but let's just assume that it exists.

Moist air comes from the west and causes rains.

However, the Alva mountain range cuts off that wind so the rains won't come.

Something like that?

Well, climate is a combination of a lot of factors so I can't say for sure.

"But why do you call them flat-faced people?" (Almis)

Is it because they have flat noses or something?

"Well, that's one reason. However, the primary reason is that they had a custom of tying down their noses from a very young age to flatten it." (Tetra)

So they're really flat, huh...

Well, it couldn't be helped if you called them savages.

"But aren't they assimilated to the Adernians already? Then we should be able to communicate in Adernian. I don't see any problems?" (Almis)

"Yes, yes. They apparently stopped doing their custom of flattening their noses. It seems their numbers have dwindled too. There are around a thousand people left in the Alva area. They've assimilated into bona-fide Adernians. Certainly, they speak with an accent and their lifestyle is different too. But I think that won't be much of a problem." (Julia)

Julia and I agree to hiring the Alva people.

"We have established a commercial relationship with the Alva trading wool and the like. We are also quite distant to the Alva mountain range so we don't have a history of war. If we approached them with a friendly disposition then I don't think there would be a problem." (Bartolo)

"I agree, we have nothing to fear if we have Alvan cavalry. They're also probably troubled about the De Morgal Kingdom's southward policy. I think the plan's fine." (Tetra)

Tetra and Bartolo also gives their support.

"Yes... Certainly, Alvan Cavalry can be relied upon... however, we don't have official diplomatic relations with them..."

"They are nomads. Their concept of a nation is different to ours. We don't know where to find their leader."

"We also have the problem of finding out with whom do we need to negotiate."

Raymond, Ordovices, and Perm object citing those difficulties.

I see. We need a bridge for negotiations, huh.

I think I know... just the right person.

“There’s this Cretian merchant called Ains. When I got some horses from him before, he said that he procured some of them from the Adernia Peninsula. There’s a possibility he got them from the Alva people.” (Almis)

“Certainly, if it’s him then he probably knows the Alvans. Shall I call for him?”

With this, the meeting comes to a close.



“The Alva people? Yes, I know them.” (Ains)

A week later, we call for Ains and hold another meeting.

This time, King Rosyth is in attendance.

By the way, we also have to hide the matter regarding my succession as king.

“The area is divided into three countries. The Equus Clan, the Aries Clan, and the Lupus Clan. The Aries clan is weak and under the control of the Lupus Clan. The remaining two are the two major powers.”

Oh? There are two major powers, huh?

That makes things easier.

We’d have to negotiate anyway no matter how many tribes there is, after all.

“With whom can we probably negotiate mercenaries?”

“That would be the Equus clan. The Lupus clan doesn’t want contact with the outside world after all. On the other hand, the Equus clan is proactive. A part of the clan seems to practice agriculture too.”

Even if you say it doesn’t rain often, there’s still the river. That should be sufficient for agriculture.

It's only natural to have better productivity with agriculture than with nomadism. However, while it's only natural to convert to agriculture, it's normal to fear and fail to suddenly change your way of life.

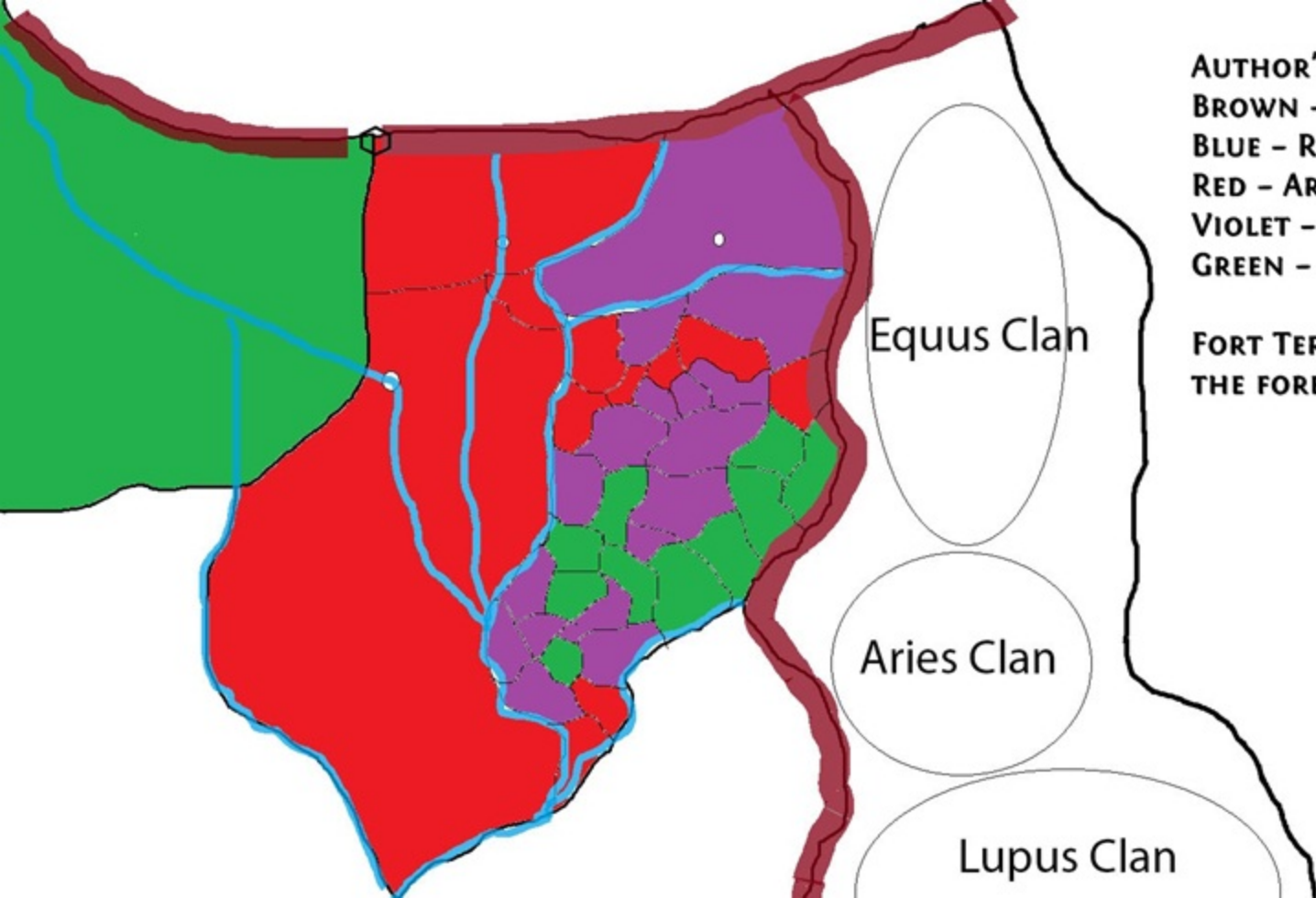
The Equus clan probably has quite the progressive mind set.

"Can you act as the intermediary on our behalf?"

Ains-san grins and bows.

"That would be a very easy task.... By all means, leave it to me."

Just like this, it's decided that we will send an envoy to the Alva area.



AUTHOR'S NOTES:

BROWN - MOUNTAIN RANGE

BLUE - RIVER

RED - ARS AND ROSYTH FACTION

VIOLET - DEBELL FACTION

GREEN - NEUTRAL FACTION

**FORT TERRIER IS LOCATED BETWEEN
THE FOREST AND THE MOUNTAIN RANGE.**

Equus Clan

Aries Clan

Lupus Clan

CHAPTER 58

CAVALRY II

We sent the first diplomatic mission to the Equus clan.

Wheat, Rock salt, wine, and wool trading then began around the time the first mission finished.

The Rosyth Kingdom is quite engaged in agriculture. but not so in animal husbandry.

Conversely, the Equus clan is engaged in animal husbandry but not quite in agriculture. To feed their nomadic lifestyle, they have to resort to importing wheat.

Thus, this is easily a win-win relationship.

As expected, it seems they too wanted this trading relationship.

In making friends, the first exchange is very important.

After this, we sent more missions once every month.

The twelfth month, the first month, the second month, the third month, and the fourth month.

The missions went well and brought forth bountiful returns.

Around the time the relationship between the Rosyth Kingdom and the Equus Clan deepened, we received a message from a mouse we planted inside the De Morgal Kingdom.

It seems the De Morgal Kingdom would conduct large scale military movements around the Sixth Month.

Apparently, they're aiming to have their invasion coincide with the wheat harvesting season.

The Rosyth Kingdom also has finished the defensive measures.

My Ars Territory too has begun conscripting soldiers.

And so comes the fifth month. We're sending the 7th diplomatic mission.

This time we're not only coming to trade but also to propose the recruitment of about 200 Equus Clan soldiers as mercenaries. Rather, you could say that is our main objective this time.

The Equus Clan are also feeling the pressure of the De Morgal Kingdom's impending invasion so I don't think it's a bad proposition for them. Naturally, we will pay them wages in addition to shouldering the war expenses.

We will also give bereavement pay to the families of soldiers who might die.

That is our offer.

However, as expected, they are still treating the military movements with caution. They replied that they're considering the offer.

And now, they have sent a diplomatic mission themselves. They're requesting for a top official to negotiate with.

In other words, "show us how sincere you are in wanting an alliance."

Having said that, King Rosyth can't go.

If he set out poorly, rather than the Equus Tribe's territory, he'd instead be going straight to heaven.

So in his place, it was chosen that...



“Ooh! This is the summit. What a nice view, don’t you think so?”

“That’s right. But please don’t get too close to the cliffs. You might fall and die, after all.”

I tell Julia in good humor.

Julia was chosen as King Rosyth’s representative.

It was supposed to be Raymond at first. However, the Equus Clansmen themselves requested for Julia. They said they have a patient in need of the famous sorceress Julia’s medical expertise.

Certainly, Julia’s medical abilities is quite a notch above the rest. She’s been doing her best after all to cure King Rosyth.

However, I’m sure it’s quite painful for her that no matter how hard she tried she couldn’t cure King Rosyth.

Apparently, King Rosyth has an unusual incompatibility with sorcery and medicine.

Well, regarding sending her...

King Rosyth seems to be greatly against it.

‘Sending my beloved daughter abroad is out of the question!’ He said.

Well, there’s a possibility that it’s a trap so that reaction is only natural.

However, without the cavalry the war won’t be feasible.

And so, I volunteered to come with Julia as her guard.

I'm touting myself as the strongest in the Rosyth Kingdom.

If I come with Julia, then King Rosyth's anxiety would be assuaged.

Besides, I'm the planned successor to the King. So, it's probably a good idea to show my face and meet with the Lord of the Equus tribe. I'll be relying on them from now on after all.



And with that, the two of us (including thirty-two (32) guards – twelve of which, including Roswald and Virgar, I provided while the rest by King Rosyth) have crossed the Alva Mountain Range.

Though we couldn't use carriages, all of us are riding horses.

What's surprising is Julia's quite skillful in horse-riding.

Or should I say as expected of a sorcerer?

Anyway, If I recall correctly, we were supposed to meet at the summit but...

"Ah, it seems they've come." (Julia)

Julia points her finger towards the Equus tribe's party.

They're a group of thirty people in horseback. You can tell they're the Equus tribe from their banner.

“Oiiiiiii!!” (Julia)

Julia waves her hand to the Equus tribesmen. It’s immodest so can you please stop it? It’ll affect our country’s honor, you know.

Though I think so, there’s no way I’d tell that to Julia.

Besides, the man leading the Equus Tribe waved his hand back.

The two are accomplices.

After what it felt like about 5 minutes, we finally meet up with the Equus tribesmen.

The man in the lead goes forward a little.

“My name is Muzio Equus Sulpicius. I’m the second son of the Equus Tribe’s Chief. You must be Princess Julia, am I correct?” (Muzio)

“Yes. I am Julia Rosyth. I’ve come as the representative of King Rosyth.” (Julia)

After the introductions, Muzio shifts his gaze to me.

“And you are?” (Muzio)

“I’m Almis Ars. I’m the lord governing the Ars Territory. I’m accompanying Julia-sama this time as her guard.” (Almis)

“I see, I see. You’re the famed son of the Gryffon, right? Can I call you Almis? Of course, in exchange, you can call me Muzio.” (Muzio)

“I don’t mind but...” (Almis)

This guy’s quite overfamiliar. Hey.

“Haha, no need to be so stiff and polite! I’m just the second son after all!!” (Muzio)

He’s slapping my back without reserve.

It’s the first time I’ve met this type of person huh...

“Ah, Is that so? Then let’s hold back on the honorifics. But please, stop hitting my back. It hurts after all.” (Almis)

“Ohtto. Sorry, Sorry.” (Muzio)

Muzio stops hitting my back.

I’ve never seen this kind of person before even during my previous life.

Just like that, I become worried about my human relations.



“At any rate, Lady Julia and Almis seem to be skillful at horse-riding. Is it because of those little tools there?” (Muzio)

Muzio shows interest in the saddle and the stirrup.

The Equus Tribesmen, including Muzio, are all riding unsaddled horses. They’re probably curious.

“You’ve prepared seats to make it easier to ride the horse, and footholds to carry the feet. I see. Certainly, that would make it easier to ride the horse and even carry equipment. Can you possibly teach us how to make these tools? (Muzio)

“Then we shall bring over some of them by the next diplomatic mission. Everyone still has to cross this mountain to return home after all.” (Julia)

Julia jokingly says.

Making saddles and stirrups is exceedingly simple. You can even make something basic right now.

You might as well give them the real deal to increase our relations if they’re going to be able to copy them anyway.

“But I must say, the wool we bought from your Equus tribe is quite wonderful. Our country’s wool cannot compare.” (Julia)

“Haha, It’s our main product after all. The secret is to make the sheep exercise, feed them high quality grass, and bring them up in a stress-free environment. If I may say as well, your Rosyth Kingdom’s wheat too is quite splendid. We can never produce such delicious wheat. By all means, can you please teach us the secret to it?” (Muzio)

The Rosyth Kingdom receives comparatively more warmth and rain for a country in the Adernia Peninsula so it’s soil can grow fertile.

With these the Kingdom can harvest high quality wheat.

As expected, there’s no way those who’ve studied nothing but agriculture recently can lose.

“I’m not that knowledgeable in agriculture but... Sir Almis is, am I right?” (Julia)

Julia passes the torch to me.

Certainly, I’m quite knowledgeable in agriculture but...

“Almis, by all means, teach us!” (Muzio)

“Well... I don’t mind but... I won’t be able to say anything without seeing your

agricultural methods first. Well, for the meantime let's talk about it in general. There are three factors needed to raise crops." (Almis)

I teach Muzio about the basics of agriculture.

"What you need are water, sunlight, and soil nourishment. You can't grow crops with even just one of these missing. Water and sunlight are dependent upon the climate, although you can redirect water from rivers. Soil nourishment is the easiest that can be controlled by humans." (Almis)

Muzio tilts his head in confusion to my statement.

"Nourishment?"

"It's kind of like food for the crops. Don't you need to feed sheep high quality grass to make high quality wool? It's the same concept here. You need to provide large quantities of nourishment to grow high quality crops. Nourishment is inherent in the soil in the beginning so there's no problem. However, it becomes one when the nutrients become exhausted." (Almis)

Muzio seems to have a flash of inspiration.

"I see. That's why we get fewer harvests every year, huh. It was strange after all even though the weather wasn't horrible. So then, how would you return the nutrients to the soil?" (Muzio)

This guy is quick on the uptake, huh.

Now then, up to how much do I need to explain.

"First, the typical method is to let the fields rest. In other words, it's a method where you don't cultivate anything for a year. It'll recover a year's worth of nutrients." (Almis)

"I see, I see. However, with that we would have to reduce our arable land, huh. Furthermore, the soil won't be able to completely recover, am I right?" (Muzio)

Faster, tell me more.

Muzio's eyes are telling me that.

"We can artificially supplement the lacking nutrients. Let's see... For example, like scattering ashes to the fields or scattering soil taken from the forest. Forest soil is packed with large amounts of nutrients. You'll know because they can support the growth of huge trees." (Almis)

I declare as I survey the surrounding trees.

Even though humans haven't touched any of them, the trees are growing chaotically as if they're competing to become the biggest tree.

I read this somewhere in a book. That the forests imagined and yearned for by city dwellers are forests that have been touched by human hands. Actual forests are much more terrible places.

The Romano Forest kind of feels like this huh. Although the varieties of trees growing are different.

"Hou, Forest soil, is it? Then we'll try it immediately. Is there anything else?" (Muzio)

"It's not like there's nothing else but... Let's talk about that after the conclusion of the alliance." (Almis)

I'll keep quiet for now that sheep feces can become fertilizer.

I also don't intend to tell them about the crop rotation system even after the conclusion of the alliance.

Although that would depend on how our dealings go.

"Fufu, you're quite the tease, huh. I've got one more reason to persuade father." (Muzio)

Oh, Muzio is in the Pro-Alliance Faction, huh.

Well, he seems to be in favor of agriculture so he must be in the Reformist Faction.

“Why is the Lord Equus not in favor with the alliance?” (Almis)

“Hmmm, it’s because he’s conservative from the very beginning, see. He also hates agriculture. He said he doesn’t like something that’s like scratching the earth. We also had quite the difficulty in making him agree to the trading. He said we’d destroy our culture if we learned to live in extravagance. His primary reason for objecting this alliance is that he doesn’t want to get involved in the affairs of other countries. He also thinks that it’s stupid to shed blood for a war that has nothing to do with us.” (Muzio)

From what I heard, it doesn’t seem like he’s an obstinate man.

He didn’t object to agriculture even though he hated it. He also didn’t oppose the trade even though he was against it.

I think he saw that they’d reap profits that’s why he allowed them.

However, he’s against the alliance. His reasons for objecting are quite spot on, too.

It seems we would have a hard time convincing him. However, we won’t have any problems if we can show that the returns outweigh the risks.

Although Julia has the authority in the negotiations, I’ve received an order from King Rosyth himself to manage a substantial part of it myself.

It’s because Julia’s negotiations skills are still doubtful after all...

“Ohtto, We’ll be leaving the mountain shortly. We’ll set up camp immediately after we descend from the mountain, would that be alright?” (Muzio)

“Yes, that would be fine. It’s almost evening after all.” (Julia)

It's been decided we'll make camp after descending from the mountain.

We can finally rest.

As expected, it's quite tiring being on horse-back for a long time, huh.



Upon descending the mountain, vast grasslands spread before us.

We can turn these into farms if we could manage to prepare irrigation equipment and apply fertilizer.

Perhaps, we could even make this into a large grain producing regi... no, I still don't know if that could be done but, at the very least this won't be a hopelessly dry region.

"Alright, let's quickly set up our yurts."

The Equus tribesmen begin setting up their large tents.

Up until now, they've been acting like textbook nomadic tribes. Will this keep up, I wonder?

"Are all Equus Tribe houses yurts?"

"Well, a lot of the commoners live in yurts. However, the royal family and the nobility do have buildings as houses and palaces in the capital. We have summer and winter capitals and we change residence depending on the season." (Muzio)

With that, won't the houses you'll come back to be covered in dust? Do you leave

behind caretakers?

They don't feel like genuine nomads but rather half-nomad half-agricultural people. They also speak Adernian after all, although with an accent.



Sometime after the yurts were finally set up, Muzio's subordinate comes in a huge hurry.

"Sir, it's an emergency!! We've spotted an 'Cruel Dragon' headed in this direction."
(TLN: Literally Violent/Cruel Dragon; Will change the name next chapter once the context becomes clear to you readers.)

"Stupid! How the hell did you overlook something that big!? Why the hell did you not keep watch properly!?" (Muzio)

Muzio shouts angrily.

Dragon?

"I'm sorry... The sun has fallen so we never thought that such a thing would appear..."

"Tsk... Fine. It can't be helped. We won't be able to lay our hands on it after all once it starts running..." (Muzio)

Muzio looks over his shoulder at me while declaring:

"Sorry. It's because of our incompetence. A 'Cruel Dragon' is closing in on us. We'll hold it back so please escape with Julia-sama.... Although I would be very happy if you could participate if you're confident you can handle that lizard." (Muzio)

Hmm. What now?

I've never fought one.

“For the time being, I’ll come along and bring my Dragon Damascus Sword.” (Almis)

“Great! Let’s go and exterminate that lizard together!” (Muzio)

CHAPTER 59

CAVALRY III

This 'Cruel Dragon'... Isn't this a Tyrannosaurus rex?

No, it's smaller than a T-rex., huh.

"The Tyrannosaur is a two-legged carnivorous dragon. Its scales are as hard as iron. Well, if we aim at the gaps then we'll make do. Do you think you're up for it?" (Muzio)
(TLN: Let's just call it Tyrannosaur since the author just cut-off a kanji, the 'rex' part, and it means the same anyway. 暴君竜 -> 暴竜)

"Well, I'll probably cut through it like butter with my sword." (Almis)

I pull out my Dragon Damascus sword.

I'll finally be able to put you to good use, huh.

The rear guards will be me and Muzio, just the two of us.

You don't need many people if you're just buying for time after all. Besides, Julia would be much safer if went with fewer numbers in the rear guard.

Julia must be protected at all costs after all so it's only natural that she'd have the larger part of the forces.

Under that assumption, I need to be by Julia's side but...

I'd feel very bad if because of that we'll return with half the soldiers killed by the dragon.

I have divine protection after all, plus this wonderful sword. At the very least, I won't die, probably.

It's fine if we just deceive them that my divine protection only increases my physical strength. It probably won't hurt us much if they only know that much.

I'm confident in my skills after all. Plus, I'm quite interested in seeing something like a dragon up close and personal.

Besides, I'd be spoken ill of by everyone everywhere if I ran away from a dragon with my tail between my legs.

Although it seems the Tyrannosaur is slower than horses so if we do run with all our might then we might make do.

It's turning quite dark now. This lizard seems bad in the dark so there's a high chance of success in escaping.

I heard from Muzio that tyrannosaurs normally don't come out in the evening and they don't attack people in groups.

Therefore, there's little probability that something critical would occur like Julia's group being attacked. Well, Roswald swore to me that he'd protect Julia with all his power. It's probably fine. If it's him, then they should be fine.

By the way, the Tyrannosaur looks like it's just hungry and looking for food by chance.

"Well then, if we can, then I'd aim for killing it, okay. Alright, let's go!!" (Muzio)

The two of us head towards the Tyrannosaur with our horses.

The lizard too immediately heads toward us.

It seems it settled on the two of us as its target. This makes things easier.

We're headed the opposite direction as Julia's group.

“Alright, let’s annoy the hell out of this lizard!” (Muzio)

Muzio shoots an arrow behind him.

Though the arrow got deflected by the Tyrannosaur’s scales and did not penetrate, the attacked seemed to hurt it and slowed it’s advance.

How skillful, this guy!

“■■■■ ! ! ! ”

The tyrannosaur lets out a huge roar.

There’s no particular effect on my body except that it’s quite loud for me.

“Oi! Don’t struggle!!” (Almis)

My horse, on the other hand, is making quite a stir, halting my advance. It then rises and bends its body into a curve, throwing me off.

“Piebald!!” (Almis)

It went and ran away, that Piebald.

You went away and trampled all the hopes I put in your name! You pack mule!

Go ahead and get eaten by that tyrannosaur!!

Well, at this rate, I’ll be the one who’ll get eaten by the tyrannosaur.

“Oi oi, what do we do now. If we rode together... No, it’ll catch up by then. It can’t be helped. We’ll have to finish it here.” (Muzio)

“My bad, I’ve caused you trouble.” (Almis)

“It’s fine, it’s fine. I’ll introduce to you a good horse, next time.” (Muzio)

Somehow, it feels like I’m getting comforted after getting rejected by a girl.

“Alright, lizaturd. You’ve got me in a very bad mood right now. So, I’ll be cutting you into pieces!!!” (Almis)

I closed in on the Tyrannosaur in one breath. It turns towards me and opens its mouth. It’s going for a bite at me but such a slow attack won’t hit me.

I try to position myself at the base of the Tyrannosaur. However, I didn’t quite manage to.

The lizard just kept trying to bite at me, many times over.

It then swings its sharp claws at me but I manage to shake it off.

“Ohtto!” (Almis)

I hurriedly parried with my sword.

Sounds similar to metal clashing resonated across the grasslands.

I brace my legs to repel its claws.

The tyrannosaur rages further. If it could speak Adernian, it was probably yelling “Why the hell are you this strong even though you’re just puny humans!?” or something like that.

“I’ll cover you!!” (Muzio)

Muzio fires arrows at the Tyrannosaur while running around the its circumference on horseback.

Sounds of arrows being fired resonate. The arrows hit and pierce their target.

It failed to pierce it before but how did it manage to do it now...

And then I noticed...

Every time Muzio shoots an arrow, a gust of wind is produced.

I need to examine this later.

Alright, now...

Thanks to Muzio’s cover, I managed to successfully position myself at the base of the Tyrannosaur. The lizard was too engrossed on Muzio and it didn’t manage to notice me.

“Alright, fall over!!” (Almis)

I slashed my sword at the lizard’s tendon. Fresh blood gushes forth and covers me in red.

The Tyrannosaur’s body leans greatly as it loses blood.

I quickly escape from there by rolling away. I barely managed to get away at the same time as the lizard tumbles down.

“Alright, one more!” (Almis)

I cut one more tendon as I skillfully move around. With this, the lizard won’t be able to get up anymore.

“That’s Almis! Tell me later about your impressive strength. So, what do we do for the finishing blow?” (Muzio)

“It’ll die if we leave it alone, right? Let’s just recover the body later. By the way... can you give me a ride?” (Almis)

“Sure.” (Muzio)

Muzio gave me a ride on his horse and we met up with Julia and the others a while later.



“Almis! Are you alright..... aren’t you covered in blood!? Are you hurt somewhere?” (Julia)

“Relax. This is the Tyrannosaur’s blood. I’m fine.” (Almis)

Despite me saying so, maybe because she didn’t believe me, or maybe because she’s very worried about me, Julia goes on to touch and check my body for injuries.

“Look, you’re injured here!” (Julia)

“That’s just a scratch!” (Almis)

I got that from when I was thrown off by that stupid horse. I swear I’ll turn that horse

into horsemeat when I see it again.

“By the way, what happened to the dragon, master?” (Virgar)

Virgar asks so I answer.

“I cut its tendons so it couldn’t move. We plan to confirm its death tomorrow.” (Almis)

It’s already dark after all.

Even if no more dragons come out, wolves will.

Honestly, a pack of wolves is more dangerous than one tyrannosaur.

“You speak as if it’s just nothing, huh……. You know, it normally takes 10 people to bring down a tyrannosaur.” (Virgar)

Virgar murmurs dryly.

“Then let’s go back to the yurts we’ve just set-up, Lady Julia.”

We all went back to the original camp site as per Muzio’s suggestion.



“Alright, Let’s sleep together tonight, Almis.” (Muzio)

“...Well, that’s fine. But choose your words next time.” (Almis)

I feel a lot of weird stares on me. Julia's here too so please don't look at me like that.

"I'll take care of the snacks. I'll leave the booze to you." (Muzio)

"Sure." (Almis)

I can only choose good alcohol from the goods we brought for trading. This is for diplomacy so I'll just write it off as a necessary expense. It won't be a problem.

"Alright, Cheers to our friendship!!"

"Cheers!!"

I'll play along even though I don't remember us becoming friends. It's important to get along after all.

"Now..... please tell me about that great physical abilities you possess. I heard rumors about you being able to take down bears but, there's no way it's just bears. You're actually beyond human, you know?" (Muzio)

"Well, if it's just that then I'll tell you. However, you'll also have to tell me about that unnatural wind the blows every time you shoot an arrow, okay?"

Muzio laughs with an expression as if saying "as expected, he noticed, huh."

Thus, we begin our conversation.

"That's a divine protection. I can freely manipulate wind. It's called the 'Divine Protection of the Wind Spirit.'" (Muzio)

It's another divine protection, huh.

It's because of the fairies, huh.

In other words, they're arrows enchanted with the power of the wind, huh. It seems quite convenient.

"So, how about yours? I'll tell you upfront. Normal humans will immediately get eaten by a tyrannosaur from the very start. What kind of reflexes do you have to be able to ward off such a beast. You'd also need skill to be able to cut off its tendons. It's not like that lizaturd is just standing still. Normally, it'll be moving around. I also couldn't believe it when you managed to parry its claws. Those arms have the power to blow away horses, you know?" (Muzio)

It's as if you're describing an inhuman monster... Well, you're not necessarily wrong ((about my capabilities)).

"Mine's also a divine protection, just that. It's called 'the Hunter's Divine Protection.' It increases my physical abilities." (Almis)

I give off a lie.

When I talked about divine protections with Ains-san, he told me about this 'Hunter's Divine Protection' with a similar effect as mine.

It's not like I don't have feelings of guilt about deceiving him. I told him something quite a bit different from the truth, after all.

"Alright, as for me, I want to have the alliance with the Equus tribe. Can I have your cooperation in order to achieve that?" (Almis)

"I don't mind, you know. You'll be paying us anyway, right? We're poor. That's why we'll greatly welcome this increase in income. We're poor to the extent that should our wool be a little bit poorly brought up, a lot of us would have to resort to either abandoning

or selling our children. Besides, the wheat we get from you can be stored for a much longer time than our native meat and cheese. However, there are, of course, those who would not want to shed blood for the sake of another country. You would have to do something about those. Furthermore, we would become hostile with the De Morgal Kingdom, too. Risking life for grain and salt as compensation is quite..." (Muzio)

Muzio declares as he drinks his liquor.

I then tell Muzio my plan.

"In short, the only problem is you shedding blood yes? We, the Rosyth Kingdom, will also promise to come to your aid when the Equus tribe gets into a crisis. Is that still not enough?" (Almis)

Muzio opens his eyes to my statement.

"No, we don't have problems with that. We're quite threatened by the Lupus tribe, after all. We consider the Rosyth Kingdom a strong army. You'll be a big help. The actual problem is what if the Lupus tribe mimics us and goes into an alliance with the De Morgal Kingdom... If Almis and the others fight with us, then there won't be any problems. However, would that condition be fine with you?" (Muzio)

"Yes, that would be fine. I'm given full authority by King Rosyth to negotiate." (Almis)

If it's a two-way alliance, as opposed to a one-way alliance, then they'd find it difficult to complain. It'll serve as a deterrent after all so it's not a bad proposition.

I've already received full permission from King Rosyth after all. He told me I'm free to enter any treaty so long as it's not hugely problematic.

"However, isn't King Rosyth ill? We don't have assurance that the next king would honor this treaty..." (Muzio)

"If it's about that, then don't worry. We've already secured the approval of the next king. Although, I can't tell you who he is, okay?" (Almis)

Well, that's me anyway.

"I see. We'll make do with that. The rest would depend upon the remuneration, the number of personnel, and the personnel selection, right? Well, I would be fine as the commander. I lead the Pro-Alliance faction after all. Ah, right? Is it fine to pillage?" (Muzio)

"So long as it doesn't hinder the battle plan. However, you don't have to worry about plunder. We're preparing just the right place to pillage." (Almis)

For the nomads, war means plunder. If there's no plunder, there's no war. You could say that they're a race that wages war specifically for pillaging.

They'd probably do it anyway even if you tell them to stop. So in exchange for permitting it, it's better to just give them a specified location to pillage.

"Hmmm, in other words, that place would be in the De Morgal Kingdom, as opposed to the Rosyth Kingdom, is it. You're surprisingly confident in your plans, huh. Furthermore, a specified place? I expect it's somewhere profitable?" (Muzio)

"Yes, it'll be very profitable. To the point of making plundering wheat from farming villages absurd." (Almis)

I answer while drinking liquor.

We too plan to profit there.

"Alright, after this will depend upon Lady Julia, huh. Whether she'd be able to cure step-mother's illness." (Muzio)

CHAPTER 60

CAVALRY IV

The Lord of the Equus Tribe has three wives.

They're called the First Consort, the Second Consort, and the Third Consort.

The Second Consort gave birth to Muzio.

The Third Consort gave birth to the eldest son.

The First Consort gave birth to the third son.

Basically, the youngest wife obtained the greatest position in both pedigree and social status.

It's this Third Consort who has fallen ill this time.

"I see..."

Julia examines the Third Consort's body. She then checks her throat and confirms her heart beat.

Lastly, she checks her spirit through the eyes.

"Can she be cured?"

Lord Equus watches over Julia's examination worriedly.

Julia nods her head.

“Yes. Somehow. I’ll conduct the treatment.... I would request for everyone to please leave the room. It’s a secret ceremony, after all.”

Everyone, including Almis and Lord Equus exit the yurt.

Julia breaks the ice with the Third Consort after confirming everyone has left the yurt.

“You’re not ill. You’re definitely cursed. Quite a clever curse at that. There are no immediate effects but it’s a troublesome type of curse that will slowly undermine your body. Do you have something that could be used as a curse’s medium?” (Julia)

“A curse... is it? Something that could be used as a curse’s medium...” (TC)

The Third Consort desperately tries to think.

However, she couldn’t think of anything she has that could be used as such.

“Before you’ve fallen ill... Do you not have received anything that you’ve kept up until now? Around two or three months ago? Something that you normally use.” (Julia)

“Even if you ask me that...” (TC)

“Then how about things you’ve received from either the First Consort or the Second Consort?” (Julia)

Julia draws closer to the Third Consort.

“This pendant was given to me by the Second Consort as a new year’s gift. It seems to have a garnet collected from the De Morgal Kingdom.” (TC)

A bright green color shines from the jewel inserted in the pendant. (TLN: I don't know much about jewels so I'm surprised Garnets come in different colors other than red. You learn new things every day, huh.)

Julia takes the pendant and sniffs it to confirm its smell.

"This isn't it. Are there anything else? How about things you've gotten from the First Consort?" (Julia)

"Like this pillow?" (TC)

Julia takes the pillow and smells it. She frowns at the smell.

"It stinks, yes?" (Julia)

"I'm... I'm sorry..." (TC)

"No, not like that. I mean it reeks of a curse. Can I tear this into pieces? I'll re sew it later." (Julia)

It's quite an expensive pillow.

If you tear it into pieces, then naturally you won't be able to restore it to its original condition.

"I don't mind." (TC)

"Understood." (Julia)

Julia takes out a knife and starts to tear the pillow into pieces. You can now see the

wool inside.

She then pulls out the source of the stench that's jammed inside the wool.

It's a dead centipede.

"A poison curse, huh... The stereotypical curse, yes? However, it's effectiveness seems to have been controlled by several medicines. The smell, too, is ingeniously hidden. For the meantime, let's return the favor to the caster. Although only the caster, and not the requestor, will die." (Julia)

Julia puts the centipede into her pocket.

She then pulls out her medicine box to make medicine from several medicinal plants.

She shapes the powder into a ball and covers it with preservative grass.

"Take this medicine once a day for thirty days. It has a purification effect. With this, I think you'll recover. All that's left is to eat properly and have sufficient sleep. That's all. As for the perpetrator... I'll leave it to you." (Julia)

They're the same in being marred in succession problems. If she get any more involved, then it'll become troublesome. She should leave this matter to the Third Consort.

That was how Julia saw the situation.



"That's what happened." (Julia)

"Sigh, Succession problems plague no matter what country, huh." (Almis)

"That's true. There are those without a successor like our country but there are also

those with too many successors like the Equus tribe.” (Julia)

Julia and I talk while drinking wine.

We’re talking about important things so we had to clear out the people. And because of that, there’s no need to speak in polite speech.

It doesn’t seem like the main problem is that the Equus tribe has too many successors. Rather, if I were to chose, I think the real problem is the consort’s personality

I wonder how it’ll be for Julia and Tetra? Will it be alright?

It won’t be somebody else’s problem you know.

“However, normally wouldn’t you aim for the eldest son – Methyl-san? Although it would have been easier while he was an infant.” (Almis)

“I think that would be hopeless. He’d be under strict protection after all.” (Julia)

I see. It’s a last resort, huh.

Besides, it’s hasty to conclude that only the Third Consort was cursed. Relatives could have been cursed too or there might be plans to.

“Besides, I heard that women have higher status in the Equus tribe than in the Rosyth Kingdom. I heard that the mother’s speech carries a big weight. Isn’t that a good reason? Wouldn’t it be easier to kill Methyl if you kill the patron?” (Julia)

“Certainly. Low risk low return is safer than high risk high return after all.” (Almis)

I tend to lean on caution and prudence, that’s why I kind of understand.

However, wouldn’t that plan take too long?

Ah, is it because they'd be found out if they used a stronger curse? Cursing is quite difficult too, huh. It's unexpectedly unsuitable for assassinations.

"I wonder what that guy will do, that Muzio." (Almis)

"Ah, That guy Almis I shared a night with?" (Julia)

"The way you say it is bad you know. Consider your words. Though you're not mistaken." (Almis)

It's true, though. We drank the night away together, after all.

"Come to think of it, he promised to give you a new horse tomorrow, yes? Then after that would be the negotiations." (Julia)

"Yes, that's right. We'll distribute the loot from the Tyrannosaur's corpse tomorrow as well. (Almis)

If possible, I want to quickly finish the negotiations. Although, we've received a report from King Rosyth's falcon that there are still no big movements.

"I think a white horse would be much better." (Julia)

"White, is it?... Hmmm, I think a red or black horse would be better. It's cooler that way." (Almis)

Besides, I'm not a prince after all. I'm a great clansman. White doesn't fit me.

“Then, it’s about time I return to my room to sleep.” (Almis)

“It’s fine to stay the night here, you know.” (Julia)

“Stupid, it’ll be a big problem, right? Sparking our country’s succession crisis should come much much later, okay?” (Almis)

I pull Julia towards me and give her a kiss on the lips.

“Then, I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Right.”



“Well then, for the meantime let’s start with dividing the tyrannosaur. Well, you don’t have any objections with just splitting it into two, right?” (Almis)

“Yeah. The problems are the core steel (shingane) and the inverse scale (gekirin). How should we divide them? Though I don’t think there’s a way to divide them.” (Muzio)

The core steel is a special metal found in the heart of a dragon.

It’s a material you mix with Damascus Steel via a special process to obtain Dragon Damascus steel.

However, only the desert people know about that process. You won’t get anywhere even if you get one.

The inverse scale, on the other hand, is a single scale on a dragon that grows in the opposite direction of the other scales. It’s considerably softer compared to the other scales so it’s something you might call a weak point.

Its hue is beautiful so it has quite a high value as an ornament.

“Actually, I’m about to be married soon, see. That’s why I want the inverse scale. Is that okay?” (Muzio)

Muzio points at the inverse scale and declare.

I'm also about to be married soon but... I still haven't given Tetra anything for our marriage, huh.

Giving Julia something despite that would not be okay.

I guess it's fine to let him have it.

"I understand. Then I'll take the core steel." (Almis)

Ains-san would probably be able to turn this into money or dragon damascus for me, after all.

Honestly, I could care less about the tyrannosaur. It's fangs, claws, and scales might be hard as the average steel but processing them would be difficult.

Although it's just right for making armor.

However, I give it a failing grade for armor because you can't guarantee a constant supply.

Besides, rather than that, I want a horse.

"Let's not get too impatient. Come. I'll let you choose after all." (Muzio)

"Sorry. About the payment..." (Almis)

"Don't need it. You lost your horse because of my subordinates' failure to detect the tyrannosaur after all." (Muzio)

Muzio guides me to the stables.

"So, do you have any requests?" (Muzio)

“Hmm, let’s see. I’d be great if the mane were to be either red or black. It’d be better if it has a brave personality. The previous one was docile but it went and ran away, see.”
(Almis)

Furthermore, a horse which will run away when gunpowder is used would be out of the question.

“Brave, is it... a horse like that generally has a wild temperament so would that still be fine for you?” (Muzio)

“I’ll think about it when I see it. If it’s no good then I’ll just have to look for another.”
(Almis)

We arrive at the stable as I declared so.

“I’ve gathered only the good horses. The four steeds on the left haven’t been castrated. The seven steeds from the right have been castrated. Please choose as you like.”
(Muzio)

I look at the horses one by one starting from the left. We’ll start with the uncastrated horses first.

Although they had rough temperaments... these horses doesn’t look like they’d run away once roared at.

However...

“I’ll have to pass on these fellows. I don’t think I’d be able to ride them.” (Almis)

Or rather, these fellows look like they won’t let me ride them.

Although you can’t say I’m bad at riding horses, you also can’t say that I’m good at it.

I don’t want to die by falling off a horse.

I look at the remaining seven horses on the right.

They look mature and they’ll probably be fast, too.

Not bad, but...

“Hmmm, they’re quite not what I’m looking for. Are there any others?” (Almis)

“Let’s go further inside the stable. I’ll prepared some there in advance.” (Muzio)

I follow Muzio further into the stable.

“All that’s left here are mares. Wouldn’t these be weaker than the ones I showed you before?” (Muzio)

Yeah, certainly these look like several times more inferior than those fine horses from before.

However, what I want is not a fast horse. What I want is one that won’t run away when it matters the most.

“Can I make a loud noise for a bit?” (Almis)

“I don’t mind, but...” (Muzio)

I take out a firecracker.

I was thinking of using it for when we get attacked by wolves.

I throw the firecracker at the ground with all my might.

Bam. A large sound resonates throughout the barn. Muzio is petrified with fear.

The horses, too, neigh in terror and fall into disorder.

It takes a while until they calm down.

“Hey! You should have told me that it would be that loud! So, did you find what you’re looking for?” (Muzio)

“Yes, I’ll take her. She wasn’t frightened at all by the sound.” (Almis)

I point to a red horse.

I like her coat color too.

“This one, is it?... I’d pass on her if I were you. This girl has black spot patterns in the face, see? It’s been said that horses with this pattern attract bad spirits, you know. When this horse was born, for example, her mother died immediately after labor. Also, the stable recently caught fire and for some reason only this horse survived.” (Muzio)

“Then why’d you show her to me? Didn’t you gather only those that I can choose?” (Almis)

“Ah, no. Actually, I just brought her along as a joke. You get it, right?” (Muzio)

No way I’d get it. What are you, a high schooler?

Well, you’re the same age as me so you’d probably be one back in Japan.

“Well. I’ve already decided. Besides, that’s just a superstition, right? Furthermore, you can consider her strong after surviving all that, don’t you agree?” (Almis)

Besides, I’d feel bad to judge her just because of her face.

Also, if she was bad luck, why did you keep taking care of her? You could have just killed her already.

“Her parents were fine horses, see. She, herself, is of quite the splendid quality. We kept her for breeding purposes. Well, if you want her then I’d give her to you. Just don’t complain if you die because of her, okay?” (Muzio)

I won’t be able to complain if I die, this guy.

“So, would you like to try riding her?” (Muzio)

“Right. It’d be a problem if we have bad compatibility.” (Almis)

“That would be best. Just like women, you won’t find out if a horse is good until you ride them. Furthermore, this one’s a female too.”

It’s bad enough that you said that with a proud face but that joke just didn’t fly well, you know.



“Not bad.” (Almis)

This unlucky horse I chose runs quite fast.

She also didn’t struggle when equipped with a saddle and stirrup that she’s not used to.

She’s quite brave.

“What should we call you? Hmm. Well, let’s just figure it out later. For the meantime let’s call you Nanashi (Nameless). It’s difficult to choose one for an unlucky horse, huh.

N? Why'd you stop?"

Nanashi suddenly stopped. She's somewhat refusing to move.

When I look closer before us, a black cluster is moving inside the overgrown bushes.

Aren't those...

Aren't those wolves?

Why the hell did we meet wolves in our first ride together? Even though it's broad daylight and we're near the Equus tribe's capital.

You, do you seriously have bad luck?

"Well, fine. I have some firecrackers after all." (Almis)

I take out some firecrackers from my pocket while I follow the wolves slowly encircling us with my eyes.

"Here you go, get the hell away from us!" (Almis)

The wolves got frightened and fled when I threw the firecracker.

There are even those that got too scared to move.

They look so cute if you look at them in that state.

“Well then. I guess let’s escape quickly. What? Don’t mind it. For all I know, it might be me who has bad luck.”

Just like that, we were able to safely return to the Equus Tribe’s capital city.

Next would be the diplomatic negotiations.

CHAPTER 61

CAVALRY V

“Let me introduce ourselves once again, Lord Equus. I am Julia Rosyth who humbly comes as King Rosyth’s representative. This is Lord Almis Ars, lord of the Ars Territory.” (Julia)

“I am Almis Ars. I come as Lady Julia’s humble guard and aide.” (Almis)

Julia and I bow to Lord Equus.

This is the first time I’ve come into contact with another sovereign other than King Rosyth.

“Thank you for coming here. I am the patriarch of the Equus Clan. If we go by your kingdom’s customs, then I would be King Equus. First, let me thank you from the bottom of my heart for saving my wife.” (Lord Equus)

Lord Equus gives thanks to Julia.

It’s quite a good start for the negotiations.

“Now then, regarding the alliance proposal with your honorable kingdom... I just don’t see it as quite appealing. We are a poor clan. Therefore, the wheat from the Rosyth Kingdom has really saved us. However, risking our lives for that as compensation is too much. Furthermore, we will also risk making enemies of the De Morgal Kingdom. We already have the Lupus Clan as our longtime enemy. They’ve repeatedly invaded our territory after they had succeeded in subjugating the Aries Tribe. We would be under a very huge threat if they were to ally with the De Morgal Kingdom.” (Equus)

It seems Muzio's spot on as to why Lord Equus is against this, huh.

"It's as you've said. As for that..... what do you say about a mutual alliance? When the De Morgal comes to invade, the Equus tribe shall fight with us. In exchange, when the Lupus tribe goes to invade your Equus tribe, we shall fight together with you." (Julia)

Julia proposes to Lord Equus.

It's not a bad proposition. Even if you say our Rosyth Army mainly uses infantry, we nevertheless outnumber the Lupus tribe in total military force.

If I recall correctly, I hear the Equus tribe's population is around 30,000 people. Meanwhile, the Aries tribe and the Lupus tribe has around 10,000 people and 30,000 people respectively.

Since the Aries tribe was already subjugated by the Lupus tribe, that would mean that we would potentially have 40,000 enemy citizens.

Nomads have bigger percentage of soldiers among their citizens... around 70% which would amount to 28,000 enemy soldiers.

The Equus tribe can mobilize about 21,000.

We'd be 7,000 men short.

However, I can reckon the Rosyth Kingdom would be able to gather more than 8,000 soldiers.

Even if we don't participate directly in the possible war, the mere existence of our 8,000 soldiers can be a huge deterrent.

Lord Equus shows a slightly troubled expression at Julia's proposal.

However...

"That's certainly a very tempting proposition. However, with that, our gains would

only match our losses. We have no reason to accept an alliance that would not give us a net profit.” (Equus)

That’s true.

However, we’ve anticipated this response. Julia and I have already discussed it.

“Lord Equus. May I humbly ask you a question?” (Almis)

“What would that be?”

Lord Equus looks at me doubtfully.

“The next lord of the Equus tribe would be Sir Methyl, yes?” (Almis)

I ask just to break the ice. It’s not like I didn’t really knew.

Lord Equus has already designated Methyl as successor.

In a word, I’m setting up the premise.

“That would be correct... and why do you ask?” (Equus)

“How about we carve Prince Methyl’s name into this treaty? How does that sound to you?” (Almis)

In other words, the treaty would make it appear that the Rosyth Kingdom recognizes the succession of Prince Methyl.

Naturally, the Rosyth Kingdom neither has authority nor duty to poke its head into the Equus tribe succession matters.

However, this would become a huge check.

“Apart from Sir Methyl, I’m thinking you would also want to include the second prince, Sir Muzio, and the third prince, Sir Ledus’ names.”

Naturally, in their capacity as Princes.

In other words, we would make it appear that the two princes recognize Prince Methyl’s succession.

Naturally, they won’t be able to veto. In Equus common law, the patriarch’s orders are absolute, after all.

There’s a huge merit in decreasing the possibility of internal strife even if just by a little, right?

Besides, though this depends on whether or not the third consort was consulted... we’d be sending a message to King Equus that our country knows his country’s weak point – the succession crisis putting him in a check.

“Yes... Not bad. However, there’s one problem. King Rosyth is on the verge of death. If the next king were to disregard the alliance then our country would have shed blood for nothing.” (Equus)

“That won’t be a problem. The next Rosyth King, too, has already given his consent to the alliance. I won’t be able to specifically name him though.” (Julia)

Julia answers.

However, Lord Equus shakes his head.

“Word of mouth won’t do. I want written proof. Lord Almis Ars, I want your honorable signature.” (Equus)

“Yes yes, I understand. Everything would be fine if I just sign her... wha!?”

Hey, how did we get found out!!” (Almis)

“It would seem my assumptions were correct, huh. I’ll give you a piece of advice, nothing, such as kissing, is beyond the sight of my mice. Also, it would be best if you practice hiding your facial expression before you become king. You too, Lady Julia.” (Equus)

Damn...

If I hid my expressions, wouldn’t we end up just like having an affair?

Alright, from here on out, we should only kiss in definitely safe places.

“Uhm... That’s...”

“Please be at ease. I’m not going to return good with bad. Lady Julia has shown great thought in the matter regarding my three wives. I’ll keep my mouth shut.” (Equus)

In other words, “if you want me to keep silent, then you should also keep silent about the curse.” Something like that.

We got countered badly, huh.

“As for the treaty, I want you to sign, not as the next king nor as the lord of the Ars Territory, but as Sir Almis Ars, the individual. Would that be fine?” (Equus)

He’s making sure I won’t renege on the treaty since I could argue I signed it not as king but as leader of the Ars Territory, huh.

Well, that's fine. I don't intend to do that from the very start.

"I understand. Then I shall sign." (Almis)

"Then let us have a feast this evening. We shall hold the signing after that." (Equus)



"A feast huh. I wonder what kind of food they'll serve. I'm looking forward to it. Older Brother. (Roswald)

"Let's see... Well, it'll probably be lamb meat, kumis and something along those lines. Also, some cheese." (Almis) *(TLN: Kumis is fermented horse milk alcoholic drink.)*

I'm not really looking forward to it.

The food will be several times poorer than the Rosyth Kingdom's after all.

However, as the banquet was about to start, we received a message via a falcon.

"The De Morgal Army is assembling. More than 10,000 men. Hurry up with the negotiations. Should you still fail to reach a conclusion by tomorrow, return home immediately. We'll just need to revise the plan. King Rosyth." (Message)

I guess we'd be skipping the banquet, huh.

"We deeply apologize, Lord Equus. Even though you've prepared all of this for us." (Julia)

"Please raise your head. It can't be helped if your fatherland is in danger. Let's call off

the banquet and proceed with the selection of soldiers that would be accompanying you. How many would you need?" (Equus)

"About 300 soldiers. May we ask for Sir Muzio as the commander? Furthermore, can you also lend us horses? We will need them for wagons we'd be using to carry plunder." (Almis)

I answer in Julia's place.

Lord Equus replies in good humor.

"To be worrying about plunder even before you've won. You seem to be very confident. No, I'm not being cynical – I'm praising you. You can take as much horses as you need. For free, if you're just borrowing although we presume you'd be returning them alive, yes? Now, Muzio!! I order you to head for the Rosyth Kingdom! You shall leave tomorrow morning!"

Muzio kneels.

"Understood! I shall spread the name of the Equus tribe amongst the De Morgal and Rosyth Kingdoms!" (Almis)

Thus, we hurriedly conducted war preparations.



"King Rosyth, we have returned!" (Almis)

"Good work. That said, you're a day earlier than I expected, huh. Is this the power of horses' maneuverability?..." (Rosyth)

King Rosyth shows a surprised expression and voices his admiration.

Muzio, who's sitting beside me, lowers his head to King Rosyth.

"I am Muzio Equus Medias, second son of the chief of the Equus Tribe. I have come here to lead the 300 cavalrymen from our tribe." (Muzio)

"Commander, I give you my thanks. I'll have you, Sir Muzio, fight under the command of Sir Almis. Then let us proceed immediately to the war council... No, let's have the confirmation. After that, let's have Almis return immediately to his territory so he can organize his troops." (Rosyth)



All the powerful clansmen, with the exception of Almis Ars, have assembled.

Then, it was announced immediately that Almis Ars is to be made supreme commander of the Rosyth Army.

Those from the Ars Faction, who knew beforehand, shouted in joy, trying very hard not to laugh ((for having one upped their enemy)).

Those from the Neutral Faction were confused and raised voices of bewilderment.

Finally, those from the DeBell Faction were fuming angry.

The Royal Family too is participating in this Clan Council.

Thus, those who vote "agree" exceeded the requirement just a little bit and Almis Ars' appointment was safely approved.

Regal DeBell protested not being made the supreme commander.

King Rosyth ignored him completely.

Regal ended up ordering three of his subordinates to each allow 100 soldiers for a total of 300 soldiers to be under the command of Almis Ars.

Then, under the pretense of personally fortifying the borders with the De Morgal Kingdom so that the combined army would not get flanked, he declared that he would be secluding himself in his territory with his 500 soldiers.

Almis Ars approved with a smile on his face. He extended his hand for a handshake to signify working together.

Regal DeBell brushed off his hand and leaves without a word.

The people who were always seen by his side was nowhere to be found...

CHAPTER 62

MANEUVERING I

We'll be going a little back in time.

The motion for sending envoys to the Equus tribe unexpectedly passed with little objection in the council.

The reason was Regal DeBell did not particularly oppose the motion.

For him, there's no point to trading with savage tribes but he also thinks there's little point to particularly oppose that motion.

In other words, he's just not interested.

After it was decided to send the first envoy to the Equus tribe, Almis hurriedly went back to his territory to begin war preparations.

For this war, in addition to the 800 regulars, the Ars territory conscripted around 1,200 more for a combined force of 2,000. That would be around 6% to 7% of the population.

Although it was planned to not drag the war on for more than 20 days, the responsibility ((of mobilizing such a force)) is nevertheless daunting.

Since the Ars Citizens themselves are aware of their precarious position living in a territory directly bordering the De Morgal Kingdom, there probably won't be any big opposition particularly since Almis has been exercising good governance.

The treasury, too, was particularly stable thanks to the support of the salt and paper industries.

The remaining problem is soldier quality.

Therefore, he immediately obligated the citizenry to participate in the military drills.

Once every week, he would have around 10 to 20 villages gathered together and perform drills.

If it's just to that extent, then the farmers won't be too angry.

Besides, one of the objectives is to instill a sense of danger among the citizenry.

Now, there are still things to do apart from supplying the soldiers.

First is to order Ismere, Qingming, and Lulu to further reinforce and inspect the new fort. This is to strengthen the fort rock solid ((to withstand the expected attack.))

The point is to put up a sorcery barrier around the fort and to make it more fortified than ever before.

Futhermore, Almis and Tetra have together began developing new defensive siege equipment.

Soyon was assigned to King Rosyth's sorcerers. They were made to survey the De Morgal Kingdom's geography. Using owls, they explored past midnight so they wouldn't be found that easily.

Well, the De Morgal Kingdom was probably doing the same against the Rosyth Kingdom anyway.

Ron, Roswald, and Gram, on the other hand, are responsible for the soldiers' training.

As for Yal...

He left for the DeBell Territory together with several subordinates. They were mobilized to the territory disguised as merchants.

Around ten years ago, when Ron and the others were still children, currency was not that yet widely circulated. However, within these ten years, the Adernia Peninsula voluntarily and rapidly transformed into a monetary economy. The primary causes were the Adernian kings, princes, and clansmen desire for foreign goods, their adoption of Cretian culture, and the advent of the study of the Cretian language.

As such, it wouldn't be strange to see merchants and the like.

Of course, in the DeBell territory too.

While recently all the merchants are heading for the Ars territory, there are still those who go to the DeBell territory.

At first, Yal acted like a normal merchant, trading goods here and there.

Then he devoted himself to gathering information.

It's not that particularly strange for merchants to gather information. Yal slowly gathered information regarding the DeBell territory from other merchants, farmers, and the like.

The efforts paid off and he was able to identify the DeBell clan's power structure.

As expected, the clan is divided into the Relative and Non-Relative Factions. The former is headed by Gilberto while the latter was headed by Bermet.

It seems that Bermet has gathered excellent and talented people over time.

The DeBell Clan somehow managed to become the most powerful clan in the Rosyth Kingdom (before the resurgence of the Ars Clan.)

Because the head of the Rosyth Clan – King Rosyth is ill, their prospects are bleak. A lot of personnel have been going to the DeBell territory.

Bermet would then pick them out and assign them official duties.

Although you might say the DeBell clan is monopolizing the important offices, it's not like it's completely impossible to get one.

Besides, once Regal DeBell becomes king, there's enough chance that you'd finally get your turn for one.

It's not like he has a lot of relatives after all.

Furthermore, should Bermet overcome the power struggle, he could secure an important post in the Rosyth Kingdom and he could also become a territorial lord.

Having said that, it's not like there's no dissatisfaction against them.

Plus, it's not like all the personnel have a sense of gratitude to Bermet.

There are a lot of people thinking of leaving and offering their services to other territorial lords after completely failing to obtain good assessment.

Yal is targeting those people.



It happened in the Third Month.

Yal speaks to a man of the DeBell Territory.

“Ah, Yal, is it? Come on in.”

This man, a soldier of the DeBell Territory, called Decanus Joseph invites the merchant Yal into his house.

(TLN: Found the appropriate term – Decanus)

Josef has been living off a salary of wheat from the DeBell clan. Naturally speaking, man cannot live on wheat alone.

Thus, Joseph sells his wheat in exchange for vegetables, meat, and liquor. However... the value of wheat has recently fallen despite the harvest yield not really changing much.

Though he has no way of knowing, the reason was because of Almis. The wheat that Almis had been paying to the DeBell Territory as reparations have been driving down its market value.

Let’s get back to the story.

Since the value of wheat has fallen, Joseph was forced to tighten his belt and live a horrible life.

It was around that time that Yal entered the picture.

Yal was selling unusually cheap vegetables. As a matter of course, Yal and Joseph soon became good friends.



“I can’t take this anymore~” (Joseph)

Joseph complains to Yal as he drinks his liquor.

One thing is that his abilities aren’t being properly acknowledged.

Joseph was excellent in sword and spear fighting that he managed to take down several enemies during the war with King Ferrum. He defeated all enemies he encountered.

Bermet caught his attention so he got employed into the army.

He was an existence acknowledged for his unusual excellence as decanus.

However, he couldn't become a centurion. All centurion offices have been monopolized by DeBell's relatives. Naturally, he was grateful for Bermet. However, gratitude won't feed him.

'Why does someone excellent like me have to go through such hardships in life?' he thought.

Seeing such a Joseph, Yal thought it was the perfect opportunity so he began his pitch.

"Then why not just serve the Ars Territory? I can guarantee you the status of centurion. I'll get you ten times more than you get now as salary. We'll also prepare a residence for you." (Yal)

"Haha, that would be nice... huh?" (Joseph)

Joseph reflexively asks again.

Yal laughs grinning.

"I am Yal, an operative working for Lord Almis Ars. Well, right now I'm passing myself off as a merchant." (Yal)

"Haha, so it was a ruse huh." (Joseph)

"I had no choice but to do this to ascertain your feelings. So, what do you say?" (Yal)

Joseph was greatly tempted.

However...

“...Regal DeBell is the main candidate for the next king. There’s no way I’m jumping off a winning ship. Besides I owe a lot to Lord Bermet, I’m gratefu...” (Joseph)

“Grateful? Should you even have such gratitude to that person? Isn’t it because of Bermet that right now you have no choice but to live a life of great poverty? That person saved your life, you say? Weren’t you just saying that if I wasn’t here you would have no choice but to go into debt, right? Furthermore, it’s not like it’s been decided that Regal DeBell would be succeeding as king. Besides, aren’t things suspicious lately?” (Yal)

Yal presses Joseph for an answer.

At present, there are two rumors circulating regarding King Rosyth’s relatives.

The first rumor was that Raymond would be the next king. He’s the best choice genealogically speaking so it’s not a strange rumor.

The second rumor was that Almis Ars would be chosen as the supreme commander of the army in the war against King De Morgal.

In other words, the rumors aren’t farfetched.

It was just some time ago that the DeBell Army suffered a miserable loss to the Ars Army.

That event had huge repercussions... It gave exceptional credibility to the rumors. Even if you doubt the credibility, the rumors were mostly true though.

“My lord, Almis Ars is young. He still has a lot ahead of him. Furthermore, it’s been rumored that he will be chosen as the supreme commander of the army for the next war. He’s close with King Rosyth after all. Also, he’s being tormented by a shortage of good personnel. He doesn’t have any relatives too. You’d have several chances of rising

through the ranks.” (Yal)

Practically speaking, the Ars army lacks commanders for the battlefield.

The thirty tax collectors of the Ars Territory are general purpose public servants that can both fight and do finance. However, there’s no way all of them could be brought to the battlefield.

It will mess up the territory’s management after all.

Some of them have to be assigned as direct escorts of Almis.

Considering that, they would want four to five centurions.

After worrying for some time, Joseph asks Yal:

“Three days, can you wait for my answer in three days?” (Joseph)

“That’s fine. Don’t make your new house in the Ars Territory wait for too long. (Yal)

Yal leaves with a laugh.



Yal then visits the next house.

The master of the house welcomes him.

“Please, come inside.”

Her name is Dora.

She’s a sorcerer specializing in using dogs.

“Here’s the usual liquor. Also, the medicinal plants.” (Yal)

“Thank you very much. You saved me.” (Dora)

Dora pays for Yal’s merchandise with wheat.

After having a friendly chat for a while, Dora opens up to Yal.

“Actually, I have something to consult with you.” (Dora)

“What is it?” (Yal)

“You see, I received a marriage proposal from a DeBell clansman.” (Dora)

Naturally, Yal already knew. It’s a popular story amongst the sorcerers working for the DeBell Clan after all.

Or perhaps you should say it is for this reason that Yal approached Dora.

He also knew why she’s so troubled. However, he’s pretending to be in the dark.

“Isn’t that a wonderful thing? You’d be marrying into wealth, yes?” (Yal)

“It’s completely horrible, you know!!!” (Dora)

Dora raises her voice.

“That man, his appearance is... well THAT. He’s also over 50 years... At the very least, he’s not my type. Furthermore, he has 5 wives PLUS 10 sex slaves, you know.” (Dora)

Sorcerers have high pride as women.

That's because they receive even more favorable treatment than normal male retainers due to their unique sorcery abilities.

Not only do they have high salaries, they're pretty much free from troubles in life.

Therefore, there's no need to desperately chase after a rich man. A sex maniac with several wives is out of the question.

In the first place, she won't be able to stand being treated as a typical wife the same way as a woman who's not a sorcerer would be.

Dora holds this kind of sentiment.

If the one who proposed were very good-looking or had an incredibly high social status then she might have considered.

However, the one who proposed did not by any standard have that high of a social status.

The established reputation of the DeBell Clan only has value within the DeBell territory itself.

She's not desperate for a man to the extent that he'd marry with such a small fish.

"However, in this territory, if I go against the DeBell Tribe then my job will be...

I can't rely on Bermet, too. Is there a good place of employment anywhere? You're a merchant so I thought you'd probably know something." (Dora)

"Yes, I know somewhere you can go." (Yal)



Yal visits the third house.

The master of this house is a man who has about a quarter Cretian blood.

He can speak fluent Cretian and specializes in calculations. He is a very excellent man.

“Yal, I’m sorry... Can you please give me one more month? I’ll definitely pay you back by then.”

Despite this, Amerigo has been living a very distressed life.

Since a lot of the clansmen are attracted by Cretian culture, a lot of them have also put great importance in writing.

However, there are also a lot who hold a different opinion.

In the Adernia Peninsula where wars and petty squabbles are a frequent occurrence and the danger of getting attacked by bears and lions are ever present, physical strength trumps all.

Thus, scholarship and learning where the results are hard to see tend to be despised.

This trend is currently strong particularly in the DeBell territory.

Although Bermet who was the only one who noticed him gave him a post, his life had been particularly bitter. His salary too was not that high.

Well, the Amerigo clan having a huge family of 9 people consisting of a too old to work grandmother, the wife, and six children played a huge part in their poverty.

Supporting eight people with Amerigo’s salary alone is impossible.

Since the children are still young, he has misgivings with having them work away from home.

He has thought of relocating to another territory but there are no jobs except in the

DeBell territory.

In the first place, with the exception of the Ars territory, no one bothers with doing troublesome things such as accurately collecting taxes, conducting land surveys, and creating certificates of residence.

The great clansmen who put high value in letters on the other hand are satisfied with having just one or two people who can speak Cretian.

Furthermore, only a few would dare hire people who would have to leave from the DeBell Clan. A lot of them are afraid of inciting the wrath of the clan.

“No, that would be a problem, you see. I didn’t loan it as good will after all.” (Yal)

Yal answers with what seems like a bothered voice.

Amerigo clings to Yal and begs.

“Please, I beg of you!!” (Amerigo)

“No. Is what I wanted to say, but...” (Yal)

Yal smiles and says:

“I’ll tell you about this huge opportunity to have your debt immediately written off while being able to earn a salary several times bigger than what you earn. How is it? Would you like to know more?”

Just like that, Yal succeeded in headhunting three talented people.

CHAPTER 63

MANEUVERING II

“Hey, what’s the meaning of this!!!”

Regal DeBell was fuming with anger.

Recently, three retainers have sent in notices of resignation and expressed their wish to migrate to the Ars Territory.

According to Rosythian Law, it’s possible to migrate to another territory if you submit a notice and pay the migration tax.

After that would be the agreement between the two territories.

Regal was left with no choice but to accept.

He had no reason to keep them from leaving after all.

There’s no justifiable cause to keep people with no history nor outstanding crime from migrating.

Moreover, if he screwed up to three people in their requests to migrate, he’d be labeled as a narrowminded ruler.

There’s no way he’d sacrifice his reputation just for such a lowly matter.

However, Regal was annoyed at leaving the matter just as that.

Therefore, he sent an official letter of protest to Almis Ars.

‘Stop poaching our retainers.’ Or something along those lines.

However, Almis Ars responded with the following:

“We, poaching your retainers?”

No, we’re not doing anything of the sort however... perhaps there might be some of our new appointees who have indeed come from the DeBell Territory.”

Almis Ars humbled himself and apologized to Regal.
With that, Regal got satisfied and laid down his arms.

However, the disaster did not end there.

This time ten more people migrated to the Ars Territory.

There was a rumor circulating there that to become king, Raymond Rosyth was trying to win over Almis Ars into his faction. That Raymond, in exchange for Almis' support, entered into a secret agreement with him where he would hold Regal in contempt and annihilate the DeBell territory so he could grant it to Almis.

Furthermore, it was rumored that the Non-Relative Faction's retainers, i.e. Bermet and his clique, were conspiring with Almis and Raymond to screw over the DeBell clan.

Thus, Regal was met with no choice but to doubt the Non-Relative retainers.

Everybody who had been poached were all non-relative retainers after all.

Regal ordered his own retainers (naturally, the relatives) to keep watch on the non-relative retainers with comparatively high posts and their relatives.

Nevertheless, he limited himself to observation to the very end.

This was because he was never able to completely verify the veracity of the rumors. Besides, up until now Regal couldn't believe that Bermet himself would betray him.



"Everything turned out well huh, Yal-san."

Yal's subordinate, who right now is acting as the merchant Yal's apprentice, happily said so.

"We went through a lot of trouble spreading those rumors, huh. We incurred some expenses too." (Yal)

Yal managed to win over 32 people for Almis. Amongst those, thirteen people, especially three were quite capable so he personally headhunted them.

The nineteen others remain at the DeBell Territory. Although they aren't by any

standard excellent people, they are helpful and reliable.

Actually, they help in gathering information for Yal and in circulating rumors and misinformation.

For a huge fee, however.

Those people, although they live decently with their present status, are never satisfied.

The Ars Faction has no need for those people.

Although these people aren't personnel that the faction will welcome cordially, these people are troublesome beings they had to welcome otherwise they'd backstab the faction. Besides, people who had betrayed someone once tend to keep on betraying others.

They're going to be disposed one way or another in the confusion after the end of the civil war.

Naturally, Yal has no intention to tell Almis about them. Almis is the type of person who's worried about killing innocent people after all. Plus he's the type to show disgust in breaking promises.

Yal has been entrusted with independent powers by Almis.

One of these powers is the freedom to not report something.

This is how Yal forcibly interpreted his powers.

That there are somethings you are better off not knowing.

"By the way, although I think it would be fine to do so, but is it not allowed to spread a rumor that Sir Almis would be directly succeeding as king?"

"Well, I also don't think that's bad. Almis is not a typical candidate in the succession after all.

On the other hand, Raymond Rosyth is the second contender for the throne ((next to Regal.)) The current rumors, therefore, have more credibility, right?

Furthermore, the Ars territory and DeBell territory border each other. It would be a

problem if per chance Regal invades.

If we stick with Raymond's rumor, we'd get an excuse against having Almis attacked after all." (Yal)

Regal's territory does not border Raymond's so there's no way Regal could destroy Raymond. On the other hand, his territory is connected to Almis' so should he feel like it he could go and destroy Almis.

If they spread the rumor that Almis would become king, there's a chance that might happen.

At present, should a war occur it will certainly become a very big mess. That is something the must be avoided at all costs.

Almis, too, in order to avoid that, deprecated himself to Regal in order to show that he has no intention of directly antagonizing him.

Regal should probably be not confident in whether Almis and Raymond would come together.

Earnestly apologizing to him just like last time worked wonderfully when he came to us.

It would be great if Regal would come to think of Almis as a worthless being.

Either way, we'll have him vigilant against an enemy greater than Almis that doesn't even really exist.

"Now then, next would be the last fortress, Bermet... Unless we get rid of this man, our plans won't be successful." (Yal)

I keep getting information that this guy is quite a capable person.

If the rumors were true, then that old man should have already noticed.

That King Rosyth has no intention of having Regal DeBell succeed to the throne.

The circulating rumor that Raymond Rosyth would succeed as king is nothing but a rumor after all so as a matter of course it doesn't mean he understands King Rosyth's real intentions.

Regal DeBell only became the leading candidate by chance about two to three years

ago.

If he succeeds the throne, the authority of the king would become greater because the DeBell territory would be added to the areas under the throne's direct control. With this, the total area of the crown territories will surpass that of the clan territories combined. In other words, power would be more centralized.

This is the main reason he became the leading candidate for the throne. It's not about his skills or anything like that.

Raymond's territory is small that the power balance would stay the same even if he becomes king.

To achieve the Rosyth clan's wish to centralize power, it has become necessary that Regal becomes king.

That's why the DeBell Clan and its branches do not doubt that Regal will become king. Since humans won't believe what they don't want to believe, the clan is thinking that the situation won't easily change.

However, should Bermet notice King Rosyth's intention...

He'd probably propose to Regal that they ally with King De Morgal to steal the throne and Princess Julia.

Since the easy way of getting the throne by marrying Princess Julia would be gone, the only thing that's left is the bad way – getting the throne even if you end up being De Morgal's vassal.

Regal might look brave but he is a timid man.

Just remember of the war with King Ferrum and you'd understand.

He won't be able to choose by himself a decision akin to betraying his own country.

Furthermore, his pride was high at the same time.

Therefore, he probably won't be able to stomach just being a vassal to the De Morgal Kingdom.

Thus, if you remove the person pushing Regal's back then he should not be able to choose that game changing policy.

Furthermore, Bermet is the lynchpin of the Non-Relative Faction. If he gets punished with something like a demotion then an outpouring of dissatisfaction is sure to occur.

At any rate, in order to make Almis king, it is imperative that Bermet gets eliminated. Thus, to achieve that...

“Now then, shall we execute our plan?” (Yal)



“Lord Regal, as a matter of fact, I have something to report but...”

“What?”

“There’s a possibility that Sir Bermet will defect to Almis Ars. We have received reports that suspicious people were being seen near Sir Bermet’s residence late at night.”

Regal frowns.

Honestly speaking, they have no evidence that would prove Bermet was truly betraying the clan.

Would a loyal retainer who had been serving him for so long really be able to betray him?

Right now, Regal still believes in Bermet.

However, recently, a lot believed it would be better if they were to put Bermet under observation. Even as a token effort, they should probably put him under surveillance.

“I understand. Put him under surveillance. Two, no, three people. Put Bermet under observation. Should nothing happen within a week, then Bermet would be in the clear.” (Regal)

Just like this, three people were assigned to observe Bermet’s residence.



“It went smoothly, yes?”

Yal and his subordinate laugh together.

The eye-witnesses who reported Bermet were nobody else but Yal and his subordinate.

Naturally, there's no way they have directly reported to a retainer of the DeBell Clan. They first passed the rumor on to several merchants who then passed it on to the DeBell Clan's Official Purveyor.

This person was the one who then directly reported to the DeBell Clan.

So long as they aren't investigated conscientiously, they won't be traced.

They seemed to have succeeded even though they used a somewhat dangerous method.

Regal has begun to suspect Bermet and has put him under observation.

However, this is still not enough.

It still needs one push.

"Now then, shall we use this?"

Yal has the corpse of a falcon in his hands. It is a corpse they received from Soyon. They had her deliberately kill a falcon while soul-riding another one.

A cylinder is attached to its foot.

This cylinder contains a fake letter addressed to Bermet.

In other words, they're making it out to be a letter from the Ars Clan to Bermet that has fallen when it was attacked on the way by a wild falcon.

Should they manage to skillfully show this to Regal later, then he would come to completely doubt Bermet.

The problem is how should they go about this.

If they directly sent this to Regal or any of his subordinates, then as a matter of course Yal's background would be investigated.

Even if you say the time they acted as merchants and the time they poached estranged talent from Regal's camp were a little bit off from each other, they still overlap.

With this, everything they have worked for would have come to naught.

The method they'd use would be...



Once every month, the DeBell Territory opens a public market. Merchants would gather here to sell their goods.

To reach this place, there's a path every merchant would have to cross.

"Now then, if we leave this here, then passing merchants would pick it up and send it for us sooner or later."

Yal and his subordinate turned up in that path early in the morning, before the sun has risen. There they leave behind the falcon's corpse.

Merchants, at the bare minimum, should be able to read letters so they should be able to understand what the letter inside the cylinder would be about.

They should be able to immediately notice how important the letter is and would immediately send it to the authorities.

Had they done this late at night then a cat might come to snatch it away.

Had they done this when the sun has risen then the merchants would have gathered already and they won't be able to place the corpse on the path.

This is just the perfect time.

"Then let's see how this goes. If it fails, we'll just have to revise the plan and try again."

"You're right. Let's pray a cat won't take it away."

The two take their leave.



A few minutes later, a merchant happens to pass by and picks up the falcon.

Normally, he would've ignored the corpse, but he noticed the strange cylinder attached to its foot.

Furthermore, it seems that the cylinder was quite the high quality.

He did not peek inside.

Since the cylinder looks as if it's purposely designed and since they purposely used a falcon, then there's no mistaking that it's important classified information.

If he had peeked inside, then he'd be in huge trouble.

There's no option left but to kill people who know important secrets... The merchant kindly says no to such a prospect.

One way or another, the cylinder managed to reach Regal's court. Regal reads the letter inside the cylinder.

The letter was clearly addressed to Bermet. It's about what social position Bermet would be granted after he betrays Regal.

Unfortunately, the sender has not written a signature, name nor left behind a family crest.

However, judging by the current state of affairs, the one who sent this letter is without doubt either the Ars Clan or Raymond.

Regal calmly states:

"Grant a reward to the person who brought this letter. Furthermore, add twenty more people to the team observing Bermet."



Bermet visits Regal's court with a heavy heart.

Certainly, after having been posted with more than 20 guards, he would have understood that he is currently under suspicion.

At this rate, he'd end up being killed.

However, he probably won't be given a chance to explain himself, too. Regal is a stubborn man who refuses to yield once he has decided, after all.

Bermet's heart was overflowing with anger against Almis Ars for having done such foul play, with anger against Regal for having readily believed such a plot, and with exasperation towards himself for having been defeated.

"What is it, Bermet?" (Regal)

"No,... Lord Regal. Actually, I am already old. I have already stood firm in the path that Lord Regal becomes king. I intend to humbly retire in this place." (Bermet)

After declaring such, Bermet leaves Regal's palace. Regal did not even have him detained.

Thus, he returned to his residence.

Since he has lost his loyalty to Regal, he has also forfeited the blessings of the "Divine Protection of the Great King."

An illness that had held him back since long ago then rapidly progressed. Just like that, Bermet breathed his last.

He was 82 years old.

However, Bermet was probably happy.

Since his family and relatives were spared from being accused of rebellion.

CHAPTER 64

SEVEN DAYS WAR I

“Tonino. Do you think we’ll win this war?”

The first prince of the De Morgal Empire, Carlo De Morgal, asks his general, Tonino.

“Certainly. Without fail, I will bring us victory.” (Tonino)

“Is that so? Then I’ll leave this to you. I entrust everything to you.” (Carlo)

Carlo completely puts all command of the war to Tonino.

Carlo is 20 years old.

Although he is the first prince, since he is the child of a concubine, his status, by any standards, is not that high.

However, since he is the child of the king’s favorite consort plus he looks a lot like his mother, he is quite doted upon by the king.

The objective of this war is to expand territory as well as to give Carlo some achievements.

You really can’t say that his ability is high.

By nature, his body is not strong plus his disposition is docile. Furthermore, this is his first battle.

Then how about his administrative skills? If you asked, then prepare to be disappointed. He’s not one of the sharpest tools in the shed either.

His one saving grace, however, is that he himself understands that he is incompetent. That’s what separates him from the others.

Therefore, it’s basic sense for him to pass on the tasks to a much more competent subordinate.

Carlo's only jobs are to drink liquor, admire the fine things in life, and to flirt with his sex slaves.

The one using such a Carlo is Tonino. He is the younger brother of Carlo's mother... In other words, he's Carlo's uncle.

From the very beginning, Tonino's family was not of a good pedigree but when his sister rose up in the imperial court he was able to secure a big patron in her.

Tonino himself was quite the prodigy that he managed to obtain promotions left and right. Then, just like that, he was made in charge of a whole army.

There are two reasons why Tonino was appointed by Carlo. First, he's family. Second, he's a genius.

In the event that Carlo becomes king, Tonino was promised that he would be appointed supreme commander of the army. That being said, he still doesn't have peace of mind. It won't be funny if he somehow gets axed after all.

Therefore, he intends to bind his own daughter to Carlo. With this, he would be able further strengthen their connection and completely secure his own status.

"What are you doing standing there grinning?" (Carlo)

"Ah no, I humbly apologize." (Tonino)

Tonino hurriedly stops his delusions about what would happen after he becomes the supreme commander. He then begins to ponder over this battle's strategy.

The current objective is to seize the Ars Territory.

Once they seize this territory, taking down the Rosythian Imperial Palace would be a walk in the park. The two are a stone's throw away from each other after all.

If things went well, they might be able to immediately head for the Rosythian capital after the fall of the Ars Territory.

However,..... he's thinking he might be pushing their luck here.

The Rosyth Kingdom's population is around 170,000. If they mobilized to the limit, then they should be able to gather more than 10,000 troops.

If that were the case, then it would be quite a difficult war.

Tonino's strategy is to first seize the Ars Territory then make peace.

Then, in the ensuing peace time, they would destroy the Rosyth Kingdom by fomenting dissent amongst the Rosythian great clansmen.

One time, he tried winning over one of the Rosythian factions, the DeBell faction. However, he was refused. The faction realized that, although by allying themselves with the De Morgal Kingdom would certainly result in victory, they would have no choice but to submit as a puppet in the process.

Regal, whose self-respect was high, probably found it difficult to agree to such a prospect.

However, there is still a possibility to make the plan work by making one big strike.

The Rosyth Kingdom is the biggest kingdom on the southern portion of the southern Adernia Peninsula. They have vast fields with rich yields of wheat.

In other words, the moment they secure control of this country then De Morgal Hegemony over the southern part of the southern Adernia Peninsula would be all but assured.

That's why it is imperative that they exercise great caution in taking over this country.

The Gillbed Kingdom is also fighting this war.

Whoever first successfully seizes the south would certainly be exhausted by then.

"Come to think of it, the Rosyth Kingdom's Princess Julia is quite the beauty, I heard. I'm so looking forward to her." (Carlo)

Carlo let's out his thoughts while unconsciously tapping his feet.

"Once we win, we'll turn all Rosythians into slaves. That's why she'll soon belong to you, you know." (Tonino)

In reality, Tonino wanted to have Princess Julia as a reward. However, he nevertheless declared such while truly feeling disappointed inside.

In the Adernia Peninsula, the citizens of a losing country are generally made into slaves. Nevertheless, it's not like all of them fall unto slavery unconditionally.

Those who seize all resistance at an early stage and those who cooperate are all spared from such a fate. In all, about 40% of the losing side's population usually fall into slavery.

"Don't make such a disappointed face. In exchange, how about you get the wife of the Ars Territory's lord? I heard she's quite the beauty, too." (Carlo)

"Another's wife, huh..." (Tonino)

Tonino makes a dissatisfied face. One of Tonino's bad points was that you can easily see what he's thinking in his face.

Tonino is a unicorn so he won't be satisfied by another man's wife.

"Hmm. You don't change, huh. You should just stop caring about that membrane." (Carlo)

"Ah, no. I'm not concerned about the membrane, you know. I'm more concerned about the fact that she already has experience even if just once." (Tonino)

As they were starting the dirty talk, the fort comes into view.

Just like the reports said, it was exceptionally made.

According to the mice's reports, about 8,000 troops were seen manning the fort.

"Well then, let's advance so we can set up camp in a little while. Shall we immediately commence our attack?" (Tonino)

"Yeah, I'll leave it all to you." (Carlo)



The Adernia Mountain Range is a huge mountain range located between the Rosyth Kingdom and the De Morgal Kingdom.

Because of this mountain range, invading with a large army is difficult.

Nonetheless, there's a point that cuts the mountain range into two. Its origins vary according to different legends. One says that the ground shook violently and divided the range into two. Another says that giants had stepped on that very spot and crushed it. Another said that the Griffon and a Divine Dragon had a duel and in the process made that spot.

This point is where the De Morgal Kingdom, the Ars Territory, and the Romano Forest all meet.

Possessing very little area, this point is called the Terrier plains.

In the event that the De Morgal Kingdom comes to invade the Rosyth Kingdom, they would certainly have to pass through this plain.

Although it is called a plain, its terrain is gently rolling.

It is on top of a slightly elevated hill in the area that Fort Terrier is located.



Fort Terrier has two sets of walls.

First is the inner wall.

It's a wooden wall that has existed since the very first fort. It is exceedingly fragile.

Next is the most important one, the outer walls.

It's a newly constructed stone wall.

Its width is around a meter while its height was around 5 meters.

They dug a moat around the outer wall and hung a drawbridge to connect a gate to the outside.

The fort, by the way, has two gates – one on the south and one on the north.

The wall protrudes on both sides of a gate. This protrusion is not a rampart but rather a tower like structure. Its height is around 7 meters.

In short, the structures around the gates made it easier for bowmen to gather and concentrate their fire.

In the headquarters of this fort, Almis had set up his command.



“Our combined forces are around 8,000 Rosythian troops and around 300 Equus troops. In total, 8,300 troops.”

More great clans than I expected brought out their forces. Furthermore, the numbers were beyond expectations too. However...

“The enemy’s combined force is around 25,000...”

“You can feel their seriousness, huh.”

Tetra says while the report was being read.

Furthermore, according to the mice’s reports, the enemy has brought with them a lot of siege equipment.

We’re in trouble.

There’s one saving grace however.

“Since the enemy has brought that many equipment, it could only mean that they couldn’t have brought that much rations. This is convenient for us.”

Fort Terrier is in the border between the De Morgal Kingdom and the Ars Territory.

In other words, the northern side is De Morgal Territory.

It's harvest season so army provisions would, depending upon circumstances, be met once the wheat is harvested and immediately sent to the battlefield.

Even if they hadn't brought anything in advance, transporting the rations would not be that difficult. In other words, they intend to completely rely on a supply line.

After taking Fort Terrier and advancing deep inside the Rosyth Kingdom, they would then secure rations from the Rosyth Kingdom's harvested wheat.

Therefore, there would be no need to march while carrying a lot of rations.

With that, it would be more economical to just bring more siege equipment to make the fort fall faster in a decisive engagement.

Although they are bound in a cease-fire agreement with the Gillbed Kingdom, they are still in bad terms.

They're also competing in who gets to secure much of the southern Adernia Peninsula.

In this battle, Ron and the others has taken up the roles of Chiliarchs. *(TLN: Literally meaning commander of a thousand soldiers. It's Greek though, because I couldn't find a Latin equivalent. "Tribune" or "Tribunus Militum" doesn't sit well with me for some reason. Maybe I'll revise the other titles like centurion and decanus into Greek later.)*

We also need to have them get achievements. It would be problematic if my vassals stop at the centurion rank.

"Well, we should be able to win. All we need is to put up with the siege for three days to succeed."

I laugh while grinning.

Thus, the war which will be called the Seven Days War in the future begins.



First day of the Siege

“Now then, first, let’s encircle them.”

At Tonino’s command, his entire army surrounds Fort Terrier.

“Hey, Tonino. Though I know it’s strange to be asking this late but... Wouldn’t it be just fine for us to ignore this fort?” (Carlo)

“That would be a long shot, you see. Our army is approximately 20,000 strong. We’ve only brought enough rations for three to four days. Although we could obtain rations by pillaging, there’s a possibility that the enemy would resort to scorched-earth tactics. That’s why it’s necessary that we rely on a supply line.

As far as that is concerned, this fort needs to fall. Furthermore, it’s not like all the Rosyth Kingdom’s forces have been gathered in this fort. They should be able to scrape up more soldiers through conscription after all. If we leave them as is, there’s a possibility that they would come after us in a pincer attack.

Also should we be defeated, although I pray it won’t have to come to that, there’s a huge difference between having and not having a line of retreat.” (Tonino)

Tonino carefully explains to Carlo.

Carlo, having understood the matter, nods to show his satisfaction to Tonino’s answer.

“Then what would you do next?” (Carlo)

“Let’s see... For the meantime, let’s test their military potential. I’ll bring out the slave soldiers.”(Tonino)

At Tonino’s order, the battle slaves line up to formation. They are slaves obtained from the war with the Gillbed Kingdom.

The one thousand slaves assault Fort Terrier.



“The first wave has come... They’re wearing collars and chains, huh. It seems they have sent slaves first.”

Perm mutters so.

Now that he mentioned it, they certainly are wearing collars and chains.

Furthermore, their equipment is crude too. There are even some who wear only a piece loin cloth and wield only a stick as weapon. This means they’re completely disposable to them, huh.

The thousand slaves separate into two groups. Each began to attack the North and South Gates respectively. Naturally, they aren’t able to cross the moat.

They tried reaching the fort gates by jumping into the moat and swimming across. Their lack of equipment was a blessing in disguise as not a lot of them drowned on the way.

However...

“Listen. There’s no need to aim. Just let it fly into a barrage.”

“Haha. Ain’t this convenient. We’ll show you the fruits of our practice!”

Gram and Bartolo signal the archers to attack.

Fundamentally speaking, bows are not meant to be aimed in war. You fire them in volleys. In other words, it’s basically firing a lot hoping some hit the target.

If you went the other way and tried aiming the bow, you’d only give the enemy an opening to attack.

The enemies are currently swimming across the moat.

Because of a movement spell, they were easy targets for the bowmen.

The battle slaves sink in the water after they get hit one after another.

However, they desperately put up a bridge. The slaves ran across that, bringing over ladders, and tried to climb over the fort walls.

“At any rate, their equipment is so crude, huh.”

Gram hits a slave with an arrow.

The battle slaves are wearing nothing above their waists and have no form of protection whatsoever. One by one they get hit by the arrows and sink into the water.

“Oh, they’re retreating, huh.”

Bartolo drinks liquor while looking at the soldiers turn their backs. He stops his bowmen from shooting at them.

It’s pointless to waste valuable arrows. Their fates have been sealed after all.



“Haa, you incompetent lot. I thought at least one of you would’ve made it up across the fort walls but... I guess it was my fault for raising my hopes on you, huh.”

Tonino gazes at the returning battle slaves.

He then orders his bowmen.

“Kill them all.”

Not even ten seconds have passed. All retreating slaves were shot and killed.

“Now then, let’s confirm their identities. Let’s also have their families killed. Those who aren’t here shall be considered heroically killed-in-action. Send a message via falcon to have their families released from slavery.”

Tonino keeps his promises.

Even if it was made with slaves.



“Now then, battle slaves. Your sacrifice won’t be forgotten!! With this, a bridge across the moat was established. Main army, advanc... what the?”

Tonino doubts his eyes.

Somehow, the bridge was suddenly blown away.

He couldn’t understand what was happening.

“Tha, that’s the rumored fire medicine!... Cheating bastards!!”

Just like that, they had to start their siege over to step one.

CHAPTER 65

SEVEN DAYS WAR II

“Well, Fine. Let’s just take this time to recover and send another assault later.”

Tonino orders the siege equipment to be prepared in anticipation of the next assault.

Siege equipment are difficult to bring fully assembled so they’ve only assembled a part in the capital city. They intend to put them all together after arriving at Fort Terrier.

They come in different varieties such as catapults, siege towers, stairs, battering rams, and ships.

If you brought this much then normally you would have enough force to be able to bring the enemy down.

Furthermore, they now have prepared countermeasures for the fire medicine.

“Now then, let the siege begin.”



(Almis POV)

The bowmen fire arrows as the enemy siege towers draw near the edge of the moat. The arrows kept pouring like rain.

Alongside the siege towers, the enemy also used boats to cross the moat. They then set up ladders against the walls and try to climb over.

They also tied together boats like a bridge. Using that, they bring over their battering rams and begin attacking the fort gates.

“What an intense assault, yes?”

Perm mutters while avoiding arrows.

“However, we won’t fall with just this much, you know. We, too, have defensive siege equipment.”

About the same time I said so, one of the enemy siege towers becomes engulfed in white smoke.

Then, the sound of explosions shakes the area and a second and a third tower gets engulfed in white smoke.

“Fire medicine, huh...”

“Yes, that’s right. Courtesy of our catapults and ballista.”

Ismere was quite knowledgeable in other areas apart from construction too such as regarding these siege equipments. These were made under her instructions.

Javelins don’t have enough range after all.

Since Ismere was able to construct ballista, I asked her if she could make crossbows and I got an affirmative.

However, it seems mass producing them wouldn’t be the best idea. They weren’t that much powerful, she said.

When I thought about it, the Battle of Crecy was an example of this. Furthermore, we probably won’t be able to make much with the present level of technology.

While it’s unfortunate, the bowmen themselves aren’t in any real pinch so I’ll just have to pass on the idea.

“They aren’t breaking though.”

Ordovices points ((at the enemy towers)).

Wha? That’s strange.

“Several sorcerers probably put up a physical barrier!”

They’re also using countermeasures like damp cloth and fire-resistant pelt...

“The enemy commander has done his homework, huh. However...”



“Tsk, They keep coming no matter how much you kill them!!”

Gram curses.

He’s proactively killing commander-like enemies but their morale isn’t changing.

They seem to have a proper system of command hierarchy. It only shows that they’re an army refined with a high degree of training.

Furthermore, because the enemy soldiers are furnished with metal shields, our arrows are having quite a hard time picking them off. 30% of our arrows are iron while the remaining 70% are bronze. We are indeed going to have a hard time.

In other words, it’s not going to go down like before with the battle slaves.

And because stones are being thrown every now and then, we also don’t have the leeway to safely fire our arrows.

“This won’t do... Ron, sorry. I’ll leave those who manage to come up to you.” (Almis)

“Understood. It’s probably about the time they get sick of having their stairs fall off and having stones dropped on them, anyway.” (Ron)

Ron draws his sword. About the same time, an enemy climbs over the fort wall. However...

“You did well! Eat some steel as a reward.” (Ron)

Ron cuts him down with his sword right in half. The enemy falls into the moat dying

the water deep red.

“Alright, it’s our turn now!!”

Ron and the others kill the enemy one by one and let them fall into the moat.

“Look out!”

A man repels an arrow heading straight at Ron.

He’s one of the new recruits from the DeBell Clan, Joseph.

“Alright, I got a chiliarch to owe me one!” (Are you alright, Sir Chiliarch?) (Joseph)

“Yeah, I’m alright but... what you said and your true intention got reversed though.”
(Ron)



The South Gate.

The situation here is somewhat worse.

“Hmmm, the enemy’s attack is quite intense, huh. It seems like they’re concentrating their assault here.” (Bartolo)

Bartolo drinks a liquor bottle dry. He then drops it on an enemy soldier’s head.

The enemy soldier instinctively protects his head with his hands.

Unfortunately, he was holding on to a ladder so down he goes.

“Now’s not the time to be drinking liquor, Sir Bartolo.” (Bolus)

Bolus brandishes his spear over his head and strikes a climbing enemy soldier.

Everyone’s very busy.

“The enemy commander has quite the unpleasant character too, huh. Instead of the vigorous and strong young commander in the north gate, he’s attacking the middle-aged old-timer in the south.”

While saying so, Bartolo skillfully moves and supports the bowmen. He doesn't give off pointless commands.

That being said, his orders are limited to what he could cover.

One after another, the enemy soldiers crossed the moat and are climbing up the walls. It's quite a bleak situation.

"It can't be helped. Let's use the new weapon we received from Lord Almis."

Bolus ordered twenty soldiers to bring forth cylinders.

The twenty soldiers aimed them down at the enemy soldiers climbing up the ladders.

"Fire!!" (Bartolo)

Flames spout out from the cylinders.

The enemy receives the flames directly. They then fall as they catch fire.

A lot of them got so surprised about the sudden flames that they instinctively let go of the ladders and fall to their deaths.

The ladders, too, catch fire and then fall into the moat below. They sink into the water while producing steam.

"Dang, what a great weapon. It's called a 'Flame Cylinder' if I recall correctly? The one who made this is a genius. Was it Ismere?" (Bartolo)

"Why thank you for your compliments, Bartolo." (Tetra)

Tetra suddenly appears and answers.

"Ah, Madame. It's dangerous here, you know? You're a sorcerer, right? Be obedient an..." (Bartolo)

Five fireballs appeared around the circumference of Tetra's staff. They then immediately fly towards an unsuspecting enemy just as he was about to climb over the rampart.

"Sorry. I was wrong about you." (Bartolo)

"It's good that you understand." (Tetra)

And once again, Bartolo inquires Tetra.

“So, how does the thing work?” (Bartolo)

“Simple. You mix gunpowder with olive oil then you blow it with wind from a magic square. Then you add fire from another magic square this time attached to the mouth of the cylinder. It’s important to note though that you should cut the fire magic square first before the wind magic square after using the weapon. This is because normally the wind would be the one pushing the fire out of the cylinder so that it doesn’t ignite the fuel inside it. So, should you cut the wind magic square first the fire might go inside the cylinder and cause it to explode.” (Tetra)

“Eehh... quite a scary weapon, huh.” (Bartolo)

Nonetheless, the Flame cylinder is quite frightening visually that the enemy soldiers’ pace took a hit. Slowly, the tide of the battle turned in our favor. The number of enemies climbing over the walls started to dwindle.

“Well, as for a weakness, it consumes a lot of fuel, huh.”

“That and the range is quite short. It would be difficult except in sieges.”

The two continue cutting down enemy soldiers as they talked.

Thus, the day ended with the war having made no significant progress or change.



“How many did we lose?”

Tonino listens to the report. Then, he breathes out a huge sigh and lets the soldier who sent the report leave.

“We suffered huge losses, huh.”

Carlo quips as he takes a sip of wine.

“Good grief...”

This time, they lost a lot of siege towers and bowmen. The bowmen got burned and crushed to death along with the towers.

Archery is a special skill that takes a lot of time to master so recovering the lost bowmen would be difficult.

“That fire blowing cylinder is damn troublesome.”

“That’s cheating, you know. Thanks to that, the troops are stricken with fear...”

Nonetheless, there’s no rule that you can’t use weapons like flamethrowers in war.

“Shouldn’t we have to change our strategy?”

Carlo concernedly asks Tonino.

Tonino shakes his head.

“No, we won’t change the plan. There won’t be problems, see. We still have plenty of time. For powerful enemies, you only have to tire them out to take them down.”



“The casualties are... well, not a bad amount considering we took such an attack.”

There was a tinge of joy in my voice as I said so.

Though saying this is a little imprudent but I’m just happy that none of the people from my original village died. Although out of the 27, I’ve only brought 12.

Amongst the twelve, six people have ascended into managerial ranks in the army with the help of Ron and Gram. The other six are under my and Tetra’s protection so them getting KIA’d would be unlikely. However...

I want to have at least this much partiality be overlooked.

Or perhaps I should say that since losing bureaucrats and commanders would jeopardize territorial management, it would only be end up the same as with me having no such special feelings.

“Now then, I was thinking of bringing out some liquor even if just a small amount but...”

Perm, what do you think?"

"Would it be just fine? Although I'm not that versed in military matters... I can still say that a drink is probably necessary in times of trouble or emergency."

"I also agree. It's the first day after all. We have to be positive in the beginning."

Bartolo also agrees.

"I know you just want to drink..."

Tetra candidly retorts Bartolo.

However, Tetra didn't particularly disagree as if saying she won't have any problems with it.

The other clansmen show their agreement too.

"Gram? Ron?"

The two shake their heads when I ask them.

"To treat everyone to liquor... I agree with that. However, we must keep our vigilance."

"It's not the time for everyone to be drunk when a night attack is highly likely."

It's a reasonable opinion.

"Then how about we get some people to keep watch, like those weak to liquor or those who lose by lottery? Also, we should have the guys exercise self-control when drinking.

Wine in the Adernia Peninsula has an incredibly low alcohol level. You don't have to worry about getting drunk unless you drink like there's no tomorrow.

"Well, then, let's end today's council."

Just like that the first day passed...

Is what I thought.



“Night attack!!”

I got awoken by a soldier.

“It seems it went down just like Ron and Roswald said, huh.

I hurriedly went out to the action.

“Hmmm... we don’t know how many is attacking, huh.”

“It seems they’ve extinguished their bonfires so we wouldn’t know how much they’ve sent to attack. In other words, they’ve only probably sent a few since their objective is most likely to not let us sleep.”

Ordovices mutters as he strokes his moustache.

“Otherwise, they wanted it to appear as such while really intending to truly attack... for the meantime, let’s divide our troops into two. One half would sleep while the other shall fight.”

We could always wake the other half up should the enemy intensify their attack.

However...

“It seems we won’t be able to sleep soundly tonight huh.”

I let out a sigh.

CHAPTER 66

SEVEN DAYS WAR III

“Alright, such a goodnight’s sleep. What a wonderful morning. Well, the enemy probably never got an ounce of sleep, huh.”

“You have a bad personality, huh, Tonino. So, by your calculations, how long would you think this siege would take?”

“Well, considering the enemy’s fatigue, they’ll probably fall around a week later. Two weeks at most. We’d be able to secure troops, equipment, and rations from our rear after all. Really, the enemy is such an idiot, yes? To be pushing for a siege without even hope of re-supply.

The two leave the camp.

They’ve continuously attacked Fort Terrier all throughout the night. The enemy should certainly be tired.

“Alright, let’s have another wonderful day today!”



Second day of siege

“Damn, I’m so sleepy...”

Gram lets out a yawn.

“They didn’t let us sleep at all yesterday, huh.”

Last night, just as Ron and Gram predicted, the De Morgal Army conducted a night attack. That said, they didn’t try to climb over the walls like last time. They attacked a place so deep where even any arrow cannot reach. They attacked by beating large drums and screaming their hearts out.

That said, it’s impossible for us to counter such an activity and thus we couldn’t sleep

properly. As a countermeasure, we'll divide our troops into two – one-half will sleep in the night and one-half in mid-day... Still, since we'd still be subjected to continuous attacks, there's no way we'd be able to sleep soundly.

"Ah, damn. Our bowmen are starting to lose accuracy..."

Gram sighs as he watches the trajectory of an arrow fired by his subordinate.

However, it can't be helped. It's only natural for one's concentration to drop when one lacks sleep.

At this rate, a lot more enemies would end up making it over the wall. This would in turn increase the burden on our foot soldiers.

Naturally, our foot soldiers lack sleep just the same.

"Ah, DAMN IT!! I'm getting pissed off! Bring out the Fire Cylinders! Let's burn the enemy down to the ground!"

In the end, Ron couldn't help but to use the fire cylinders. One by one, the enemies burst into flames.

However, the weapons only last ten seconds.

Immediately, its fuel will need replenishing. And as if taking advantage of that moment, the enemy continues to come over the wall. There's no indication that their attack is abating.

"Damn it. However, I'm aiming to become a general. I must stand firm here!!"

Joseph swings his sword while blurting out his ambition. His efforts are more spectacular than of the other centurions.

"I won't lose either!"

Ron wields his spear on the right hand and his sword on his left.

"Now then, let us raise a blood bath!"



The Rosythian catapults and ballistae roar into action, firing ((projectiles with)) gunpowder ((in them)).

They hit their targets, the siege towers but... they didn't break in one hit.

Four hits and they finally fall.

"They were soaked with water to counter the flames... furthermore, they seem to be reinforced with various countermeasures. Damn, and I thought we'd be having an easy victory using Fire Medicine."

Bartolo sighs.

The enemy siege towers are reinforced with iron here and there. Their exteriors are completely covered with animal skin which, as you can clearly see, are dripping with water.

The most annoying part is they also seem to be protected by magical barriers.

It appears that for every siege tower, there are three sorcerers protecting it with magical barriers.

"Oi, call over some sorcerers. We won't get anywhere until we bring these guys down."
(Bartolo)

"Understood, we'll destroy them immediately."

Tetra comes out of nowhere and answers.

At a swing of her staff, particles of light come forth from the siege towers.

Their barriers are destroyed.

Then, an explosion rocks and destroys the towers themselves.

"That's our lady!! Just one hit, amazing Lady Tetra. However, enemies are still climbing over here so it's dangerous... Watch out!!"

Exactly at that moment, an enemy soldier climbs over the rampart and rushes towards Tetra.

However, Tetra calmly swings her staff.

The enemy's head flies into the air and blood splatters everywhere.

"Eh..... Is that a swordstick?" (Bartolo)

"Yes. Isn't it cool?" (Tetra)

The scabbard covering the pointed tip of Tetra's staff is unsheathed. Henceforth appears the figure of a sword. You can see that it's made from iron.

"Is milady perhaps knowledgeable about swordsmanship?"

"Naturally. Almis taught me."

"A, as expected of milady... We'll be in your care."

"Understood."

Tetra gives a thumbs up.



"Hey, Ron!! They've set up another bridge over the moat!! The Battering Ram's next! Hurry up and destroy it with some bomb spears!!

"Wait a minute, I got my hands full here!!"

While cutting apart the enemies around him, Ron hurriedly ordered his subordinates to blow up the battering rams.

Immediately, bomb spears come flying towards the targets.

However, they managed to withstand the bomb spears.

The battering rams are covered by iron roofs after all.

Furthermore, those roofs are protected by magical barriers put up by sorcerers

numbering in the several tens. Therefore, the troops below them weren't affected too.

"Iron roofs!? You've got to be kidding me!! Think, think! Ah, the bridge! Destroy the damn bridge!"

As Ron ordered, the bomb spears come flying towards the bridge. They splendidly hit the target.

The bridge easily collapsed sending the battering rams down into the water below.

Ron and the others finally get a feeling of relief.

However...

"Damn... Aren't those more battering rams?..."

Ron is reaching his wit's end as he looks at the battering rams lined up in a row.

Although they have some bomb spears in inventory... they still only have a limited amount.

They already have used up a lot of the fire cylinders.

"What do we do when we run out..."

Furthermore, the enemy siege towers have intensified their attacks.

The enemy catapults, too, sometimes score hits and destroy the ballistae and catapults here.

"Alright, we've broken the magical barriers! Quickly, the fire medicine!"

As Lulu ordered, the ballistae shoot bomb spears at the enemy siege towers. They hit the targets which promptly collapsed. The enemy bowmen stationed there fall into the ground.

Furthermore, the Rosythian bowmen focused their attacks towards them.

It's a strategy to eliminate enemy bowmen as much as possible. If they die, the Rosythian Army would have it easier.



In the morning battle, although they were numerically inferior in some places, the Rosythian Army managed to maintain superiority in the overall progress of the battle.

“Hmm.”

Almis is reading a letter. It's a letter sent by falcon. His face loosens up, so you could understand that it's good news.

“Please call for Sir Bartolo, Sir Perm, and Sir Ordovices.”

Almis orders Tetra. She immediately summons them.

“What is it, supreme commander?”

“The first phase of the plan is a success. No, it's a huge success. The enemy completely didn't notice.”

The three also loosen their faces.

“If this continues, we'll be receiving the second report by tonight, right, supreme commander?”

“Yes, should the second phase be successful as well, then our victory would be ascertained.”



In the other camp, although it was three hours late, a falcon courier also arrived. This one, in contrast, brought bad news.

(Enemy Camp POV)

“Th... the village of Dress has fallen!!”

Tonino and Carlo receive the report that the supply base Tonino chose, the village of Torres has fallen via surprise attack by 500 Rosythian cavalry.

Tonino's hands are shaking. This means that their supply line has been broken.

He, however, tries very hard to keep his clam.

The enemy, it would seem, are cavalry. The problem is where could they have come from. They most probably came from the Romano forest. There's no other route except through that forest.

In Tonino's point of view, it's impossible to pass through that forest. If you accidentally entered that forest, it was said that the Griffon's curse would strike you. Furthermore, ever since one is a child, it was already drilled into one's existence that “If you aren't a good boy then the Griffon will come eat you.”

Soldiers often abide by the unwritten rule that no one will trespass on Romano forest. On that subject, the enemy's supreme commander is rumored to be the son of the Griffon. Thinking it was just a rumor, Tonino left the vicinity of the forrest completely unprotected. It was completely a personal oversight.

However, what was worrying Tonino was how did the village of Dress fall that easily. There are around 300 troops stationed there. Furthermore, it's protected by a strong fort. The village is quite prepared for such contingencies.

Because this war is heavily dependent on the supply line, Tonino took no chances and ramped up the village's defenses reliably.

Given the difference in numbers, it wouldn't be strange for it to take the enemy three days minimum to take down the village.

Furthermore, it's strange that the enemy managed to attack with 500 cavalry. The Rosyth Kingdom should only have around 150 cavalry at best.

There's something strange going on.

Tonino immediately summoned the clansmen and the other commanders and chieftains in a council to decide whether to retreat.

They immediately reached their conclusion – a resounding no.

In the Art of War, it's common sense to retreat because the supply line is cut, even if just temporarily.

However, this war is complicated by politics. Therefore, something like a retreat cannot be considered. and completely out of the question.

The participants in this war are mostly from the Carlo Faction. You cannot simply pull out of a war where Carlo's succession bid is on the line.

Should they fail in this war, the clansmen's fate is certain.

The possibility that a next king who is not Carlo would cordially welcome them is undoubtedly close to zero.

Actually, it would already be great if their territories can be guaranteed. There's no question that some of the younger clansmen would be crushed after all.

At the very least, they believe such.

Their, and their clan's lives, territory, property, and honor hangs in the balance.

Because there's a possibility that all of those, should they retreat, crumble away, there's no way they could do such just for a mere supply base behind them.

The decision was unanimous. That is, they would immediately recapture Dress Village ((with a detached force)) to restore the supply line.

The advantageous position is still theirs since the enemy only has a small army. They have high chance of success.

"Everything's going to be fine. Send over 2000 light infantry and 200 cavalry. Ah... If we had more cavalry then it would be over in an instant. Our De Morgal Kingdom is, after all, afraid of the Rozel Kingdom so we could only rent out a little..."

Even if you say the enemy is mostly cavalry, Tonino would still be sending 2000 infantrymen and 200 cavalry. It's a numerical superiority of about 4 times. They would be able to take back Dress without fail.

In the first place, cavalry would be useless in siege warfare. Furthermore, they know the number of cavalry the Rosyth Kingdom has.

Most probably, the enemy would try to have the battle settled in the plains... Just in case, the 200 cavalry should be enough to face them.

Furthermore, it is hoplites that determine battles in the Adernia Peninsula.

The enemy has none of those.

There's just no turning back in this war.

At any rate, it's not just Tonino's promotion on the line... but also Carlo's succession and the De Morgal Kingdom's hegemony.



The war situation pretty much didn't change in the afternoon.

Nevertheless, people ranking Chiliarch and above in the Rosythian Army are a little festive while in contrast the same ranking people in the De Morgal Kingdom are a little bit down.

And thus, the night battle.



"They're as noisy as usual, huh..."

"Really. Sir Chiliarch. By the way, did you see how I fought this afternoon?"

"Yeah, I did. Also, I'm starting to get annoyed so would you shut up? I'm sleepy."

Ron and Joseph are glaring at the enemy army.

The enemy's making noises by beating drums and shouting but they don't look like

they're to attack.

Although the enemy's encircling them, their true intention is to exhaust the defenders.

"Sieges are troublesome, huh. Though it's not that bad since we still have enough rations."

If things got drawn out, then it'll probably become like hell.

However, the plan is to not let this siege get drawn out.

"By the way, I don't know about our overall strategy, Sir Chiliarch. Can you tell me about it?"

"There's no way I can tell a centurion, you know. Well, you'll know about it by tomorrow..."

An owl catches Ron's eye. It then lands on his shoulder.

"Soyon?"

The owl silently nods.

Although they requested for about 5 or 6 owls, the only sorcerer who could soul-ride one was Soyon. By nature, it would take several years plus you would need to establish trust before you could perform soul riding... However, Soyon had natural talent and was able to show she could quickly manage.

Ron takes the letter attached to the owl's foot.

"Well then. It's midnight so you won't be easily found out, but, nevertheless, take care and be careful.

The Owl disappears into the dark night.

"Sir Chiliarch, what is that?"

“Although I still haven’t opened it, I believe it’s good news.”

Ron declares so and leaves to deliver the letter to Almis.



(Almis POV)

I read the letter that Soyon brought.

After reading, I carefully fold the letter and put it inside my pocket.

“Alright, our victory is decided. Tomorrow... we’ll probably have a pursuit battle, huh.”

I feel my cheeks loosen.

Finally, this bothersome siege is going to end.

“Ron. Contact the other commanders. Tell them to shift from defense to offense.”

“Understood!!”

Ron runs off.

Seeing that gives a smile to Bartolo’s face.

“To seriously succeed here. The enemy will receive their report by tomorrow morning huh. I can only imagine the looks on their faces.”

“Right? We’ll be avenging ourselves. Well then, how about a drink?”

“That’s would be great.”



“Gee, what a great morning we have. Yes. Can’t say the same for the enemy though.

Well, then, Lord Carlo. Let’s do our best today too and siege the hell out of them.”

“You’re right. Tonino. I want to go home quickly, you know. Honestly, I won’t last for another week.”

The two welcome a refreshing morning.

About the same time the two put on their clothes, a soldier hurriedly entered the room.

“What’s the rush? What is it?”

“It’s terrible!! The town of Blouse has fallen!”

“No, no, stop it with the bad joke.”

The estate of a De Morgal Clansman that directly borders the Ars Territory is in the town of Blouse.

The Blouse clan is one of the top five clans in the De Morgal Kingdom. It leads the Carlo Faction.

You could even say that the Carlo Faction = the Blouse Faction.

Hahaha, Tonino laughs then he checks the soldier’s expression.

It’s not a joke, it seems.

“Uhm... seriously? Or perhaps I should say that if that information were correct, wouldn’t that mean the enemy has completely taken the hinterland? (Revise: maybe change hinterland into rear or flank)

Their good morning has completely turned sour.

CHAPTER 67

SEVEN DAYS WAR IV

While the Rosyth Army and the De Morgal Army slugged it out at Fort Terrier, Raymond, Roswald, Muzio, Virgar, Soyon, and Dora passed over the Adernian Mountain Range. After that, they went through Romano Forest and entered De Morgal Territory.

All of them are riding horses.

As one would expect, wagons would have a hard time passing through the forest, so they brought them disassembled. They were made in such a way that they could be immediately reassembled together using nails.

The wagons are necessary because, apart from carrying the plunder, they'd be used to carry and transport injured soldiers and important prisoners-of-war.

This operation is to invade the De Morgal Kingdom through the Romano Forest while the enemy is focused on sieging Fort Terrier. Its objectives are to destroy the enemy's supply base and to wreak havoc on the area.

That way, the enemy would have no choice but to retreat.

Then, using that opportunity, the main army shall pursue to strike a blow.

After that, a detached force would annoy and exhaust the De Morgal army here and there.

In a suitable time, the detached force and the main army shall converge and strike the De Morgal Army together.

It'll probably then be easy to attack and tear apart an exhausted De Morgal Army.

"That being said, you really know the animal trails in this forest full of trees, huh."

"This forest is just like my and Roswald's garden after all."

Soyon answers Muzio's question with a smile.

Naturally, they've investigated the area beforehand so they could lead the way without hesitation.

It's also thanks to Soyon and the others' guidance that the cavalry could advance through the forest without fear of divine punishment. Well, because they're not connected to the Romano Forest, from the very beginning there was very little hesitation from the Alva people and the Germanis people which comprised most of the cavalry as they aren't that familiar about the Griffon.

"Also, don't worry about when we've entered De Morgal Territory. I'm from there so I'll also be able to guide you. I've lived there up until I was ten." (Soyon)

Moreover, Soyon has repeatedly investigated the area via owl late at night. She's completely memorized the geography.

"By the way, about that owl. It looks like it's not native to the Adernian Peninsula so... may I ask where could you have got one?"

Dora asks Soyon.

Although Dora is the older one, in this situation, Soyon is the senior.

Incidentally, Soyon is also more powerful as a sorcerer.

"Five months ago, we procured some from a Cretian merchant."

"Fi, five months ago..."

Dora is shocked.

Normally, it would take three years minimum to be able to deepen your relationship with the animal to be able to soul ride.

"Soyon is the best when it comes to animals after all... no, really."

Roswald praises Soyon.

"Otto, we'll be coming out of the forest soon... Everyone, please prepare yourselves."

Raymond orders the whole group.

For the time being, the one in command in this detached force is Raymond.

Because Muzio is a prince, any person with a social standing below that would not be fit to become commander.

Although Raymond has no experience commanding cavalry... he still has Roswald with him as well as the cavalry specialists Virgar and Muzio.

Therefore, there won't be any problems with him leading.

"We're finally out the forest! Well then, commander. Let's advance without delay!"

Virgar tries to run off as he said so. However, Roswald grips his collar and stops him.

"Ouch, that hurts!"

"You idiot. Look, it's already dark. We won't be able to advance properly."

The sun is already falling.

If they began their operation now, the army will inevitably get separated from each other and lost.

They would, on the other hand, stand out should they use torches.

"There's a small river around 10 minutes from here. There aren't a lot of trees there so we should be able to make camp there."

Soyon suggests while pointing at the forest.

Since the horses won't be able to run inside the forest, it took time choosing and advancing through a place where they could walk. It was expected that it would be night by the time they'd got out of the forest.

"Well, isn't that fine. The horses are tired too, after all."

With Muzio's endorsement, it's been decided that they'd stay the night inside the forest.



Early morning.

The sun still hasn't risen.

Although it's a little dark, it's not like you can't see anything.

"Alright, Let's go!"

The detached force starts moving at Raymond's lead.



Horses show their real worth in the plains.

Therefore, the unit advanced using narrow road often used by the farmers.

Besides that path, all that's left are marshland and the forest which would be difficult for the horses to navigate.

However, naturally, at the end of this path is a village.

They did not avoid that village. Rather, they captured it.



The village was caught completely off guard and got captured without a fight.

The villagers wrongly assumed that the De Morgal Army had failed so they immediately bowed their heads to Raymond.

"I beg of you. Please, we will offer you all our food. We'll even give you our young women. That's why please, spare this whole village of slavery..."

"No, we don't need the women, nor the food. We're in a hurry..."

No, on second thought, village chief. We want you to come along with us."

Raymond then orders the town to fly the flag of the Rosyth Kingdom. Just like that, they leave taking with them only the village chief.

The villagers can't help but stare in confusion at the figure of the cavalry disappearing in the distance.

"Is that fine? At the very least shouldn't we have burnt down the whole village?"

Muzio asks Raymond to which Raymond shakes his head.

“No, that would be unnecessary. The food supply of the whole area is gathered at Dress village. The food left in the previous village was just the bare minimum to feed them. We won’t be dealing a huge blow to the enemy even if we burn that down. Rather, it only sends the message that if you don’t resist then nothing bad will happen to you. Isn’t that right, village chief?”

Raymond smiles at the village chief riding on the wagon.

The chief unconsciously trembles in fear.

Besides, if you say that you don’t have leeway to liberally take away slaves then you could also argue that you don’t have time to be killing them too.



One by one, they took over villages, ordered them to fly the Rosythian banner, and then disappear just like that. In exchange, they also took each villages’ chief.

They send a captured village chief to the villages who showed signs of resistance to make them capitulate peacefully without bloodshed.

By noon of that day, they reached the village of Dress.



“What’s the meaning of this!! We haven’t received any information that the main army has been annihilated! Where the hell did the enemy army come from!?”

“No... I completely have no idea...”

“Then do you suppose they teleported here by sorcery then? There’s no way in hell that would be possible, right!?”

Dress’ garrison chief is yelling his heart out.

It’s only natural that he’d feel that way.

Wouldn’t it be strange for a 500-strong enemy army to suddenly appear without warning and cause chaos?

“And the enemy’s completely made up of cavalry, right?”

“Yes, it appears so.”

“Then close the gate shut and protect it at all costs!! We only have 300 infantrymen. We won’t stand a chance against them. Hey, order the sorcerers to send a falcon message. Demand reinforcements quick!”

The village of Dress is unusually fortified.

Not only are the walls made up of a combination of wood and stone, they’re also quite high.

While the gates are made of wood, it’s made of several trees put together plus it’s enchanted by a physical barrier so it won’t easily get destroyed.



“As such, shall we use that to break through their defenses?”

“Yes, we’ll use the ballistae. You had them assembled last night, yes?”

The detached force has brought with them 4 ballistae. Strictly speaking, they brought with them enough parts to make four. They then reassembled them last night and loaded them on the wagons right after they went out to the plains.

Naturally, they’ll be using bomb spears as the bolt.

“Should the ballistae fail, then we will have to use battering rams. Anyway, we can just use the nearby trees to make some. For the meantime, before we... destroy it with the ballistae...”

Raymond cuts off his words.

“For the meantime, let’s demand their surrender. Village chiefs, if you would please.”

Raymond grins.

The village chiefs set off to the garrison chief’s office.



“We are very sorry!”

The village chiefs apologize while prostrating on the ground.

“It couldn’t be helped. There are no garrisons in your villages after all. So, the reason you came here is... to demand my surrender, yes?”

The village chiefs nod while trembling at those words.

“Tell them that when the De Morgal army notices this strange situation, they will without fail come rushing here. Until then, we intend to continue resisting. It should be they who should surrender.”

The chiefs return to the Rosythians with great haste.



“I see. Well, it couldn’t be helped.”

“Finally, it’s time for battle!”

Muzio prepares his bow looking pleased.

This will be the detached force’s first battle.

“Ballistae, cocked and ready! Five seconds to fire! Four, three, two, one, Fire!!”

The ballistae fire at Roswald’s command and splendidly hits the wooden gate. The spears deeply penetrate the door and explode a few moments later.

The bomb spears repeatedly caused damage to the gate. Since it was designed to explode after penetrating, the spears were perfect for bringing down such a target.

“Breakthrough! Charge!”

The Rosythian army rushes through the gate.



Just like that, the battle ended.

Although the enemy intended to force a siege, they never managed to put up an effective resistance in the confusion brought by the flames, smoke, and noise. They got immediately captured and restrained by the rushing cavalrymen.

The garrison chief tried to resist up until the last moment. Unfortunately for him, he was completely outnumbered and got immediately captured. The sorcerers, too, who have sent falcons, got captured relatively easy. With this, they would have to stop their soul-ride. They would risk death after all if they continued with their bodies in the hands of enemies.

With their bodies gone, the soul won't be able to return. An out-of-body death is one of the most frightening things for the Adernians.

Again, as per the village chiefs' appeal, the Dress villagers surrendered without further resistance.



Raymond gathered the villagers and the captured 100 enemy soldiers together. He then declares:

"We country has some use for you subordinates of the De Morgal Kingdom trying to invade our country. As such, we don't intend to kill you villagers. In exchange, you will tell us the locations of all the warehouses storing food and rations in this supply base. Please don't worry. We will leave behind the bare minimum to feed you all."

The villagers raise voices of delight.

In their point of view, so long as there would be enough left for them to eat then there's no problem.

Raymond then addresses the 100 soldiers.

"By all rights, we would have already killed all of you. However, you too also have

family waiting for you. Therefore, we won't kill you. In exchange, we want you to spread this around – that 'our objective is the De Morgal Army only. Stop all resistance and you would be spared.'"

At Raymonds words, they confiscated all the soldier's equipment and let them go.

There are three reasons for this:

First, it would be a waste of time to kill all of them. You can only expect further resistance if you tried to kill them all.

Second, killing all of them would only provoke the De Morgal army to ramp up their resistance. You will also just increase revanchism amongst the enemy. In contrast, should they let them go, it will only reinforce the idea that they won't be killed should they stop all resistance. This will also make the detached force's advance easier.

Third, taking soldiers prisoner and carrying them around would only negatively affect the speed of their advance so it's out of the question.

That's their reasoning behind such an action.



"Oh, they have horses too. Yes, not bad. Alright, let's get them. I just can't leave horses alone!"

Muzio and the others immediately began partitioning the spoils of war.

The De Morgal Army's equipment were quite popular amongst them.

Seventy (70) percent of their arrows are iron-tipped. These were like treasure to Muzio and the others who use only stone-tipped arrows.

Raymond looks at them from a distance.

Since iron equipment is heavy, there's no way they'd take them.

Besides, they'll be able to get them in large quantities later when the main army pursues the enemy's main army. There's no need to collect them now.

Since Raymond is free, he approaches Soyon to strike up a conversation.

"You're from the De Morgal Kingdom yes? Which village are you from?"

"I'm from this village, you know."

"Oh? This village... erm, what?"

Raymond unconsciously asked again.

Soyon lightens up an laughs.

"My family was managing farmland in this village. It's quite a big estate that we own several slaves and livestock."

"Oh, really..."

Raymond lost his bearings and tried his best to make an agreeable response. He felt like he touched upon a sensitive subject and tried to change it. However, Soyon didn't let him and talked on.

"However, my mother fell ill and died... while my father got conscripted and killed. Furthermore, our entire fortune were seized by our relatives..."

"I'm sorry. Please, that's enough."

Raymond tries to forcibly end the topic.

Meanwhile, Soyon shows a blank expression.

"Would that be fine? From that point, I still have the part where Ron's father saves and takes me in, the happy part where I fought and fell in love with Ron, the sad part where Ron's father fell ill and died just like my mother and his relatives took custody of the two of us? After that, there's still the wonderful part where, because of the curse, we got abandoned in the forest and saved by Griffon-sama and Almis."

"Ah, no, really, I've had enough so..."

Raymond, apart from worrying about several things, is bad with the gloomy atmosphere he unwittingly sowed so he declines.

"Is that so? That's a bummer. But please, don't you worry. I've visited the town of Blouse several times because I often accompanied my father when paying taxes. I can lead the way!"



“Is this the last of the storehouses?”

Roswald asks. The villagers nod.

He then orders Virgar to prepare the oil and gunpowder.

They light the fire and it immediately grows into a blaze.

Citizens who were unaware of the situation were probably shook into action. They then immediately rushed towards the nearest checking station which promptly sent out a fast horse (to request reinforcements).

However, we were already gone by the time they contacted the enemy and the reinforcements came so it's no problem.



“Such a waste, huh... if we had that much wheat then we would have been able to feed tens of thousands of people.” (Virgar)

“They'd be too heavy to carry so we couldn't take them. Besides, there's something even better waiting for us.” (Roswald)

“And what would that be? Stop hyping us up and just tell us what it is, commander.” (Virgar)

Roswald tilts his head at Virgar's words.

“Uh, did I forget to tell you our last objective?”

“Didn't you tell us to just look forward to it without even telling us what it is!?”

The other cavalrymen nod at Virgar's words.

Roswald laughs and scratches his head.

“Ahahaha, my bad. Our objective is the estate of this region's clan, the Blouse clan's estate in the town of Blouse..... specifically speaking, it's a town with Garnet mine!”

CHAPTER 68

SEVEN DAYS WAR V

The Blouse clan is one of the five leading great clans in the De Morgal Kingdom. Their source of wealth is a garnet mine which you could even say as world class.

At present, the one protecting the town of Blouse is the second son of the clan, Rene Blouse.

The current head and the eldest son are part of the main army attacking the Rosyth Kingdom.

“Sigh, I also want to participate in the war. If I did then I’ll be able to bring down an enemy commander like that Almis with my invisible slash.”

Rene talks in disappointment.

To that his subordinate answers:

“Isn’t that why your esteemed father left Lord Rune in charge of the rear? He has high hopes for Lord Rene.”

“Right? As I thought, you agree with my skill!!”

Rene gets into a good mood.

For the time being, there’s no problem in currying favor with Rene.

The subordinate knows that.

Honestly speaking, Rene has absolutely no aptitude for martial matters. Furthermore, he’s not a great fighter either. Thus, his father did not bring him along to the battlefield.

However, it’s not like Rune is completely incompetent.

It’s just that because of his timid character and prudent personality, he’s not fit to be a soldier.

He's showing promise, instead, in bureaucracy.

That cautious personality is contributing greatly in the safe expansion of the Garnet mines.

Eight years ago, in order to stop the violent cycle of famine raging the land, Rene suggested and pushed for using the profits gained from the mine to procure cattle and horses to improve agricultural production.

Because of that, the Blouse territory's agricultural production has greatly increased since then.

The domestic merchants of the garnet trade didn't only profit from the great clansmen but also from selling to other countries such as the Equus tribe and by expanding the market.

One thing or another, everyone came to recognize Rune's ability as a statesman.

The person himself, however, wants to become a soldier.

It is that Rune who will receive the following urgent report.

"It's terrible!! We've been surrounded by the Rosyth Army!!"

"Ahaha, what a funny joke. I just got a message from father via falcon courier last night that the Rosythians are still holed up in Fort Terrier...

Eh, really?"

Rene feels a cold sweat form in his forehead.

"Lord Rene!! Isn't this the perfect opportunity to show what Lord Rene's invisible slash can do?!"

"No no, that was a joke. Hmm, hmm, For the meantime, let's negotiate. No, before that confirm the enemy's number and type!!"



The town of Blouse is a walled town.

The wall they built using their assets is second only to the one surrounding the De Morgal Capital in height and strength.

From it's top, Rene looks down at the enemy army.

They couldn't see much of the enemy's forces because the sun has already set.

And since the enemy seemed to have extinguished their bonfires, their numbers can't be clearly made out.

However, if you consider how they managed to destroy the De Morgal army and invade up to this town, then at the minimum they should have 5000 soldiers and above.

Rene unconsciously gulps.

The Blouse town's garrison number around 200 soldiers. From the very beginning, they did not expect that the enemy would be able to invade this deep into De Morgal territory.

You simply cannot win in this situation.

"Oh Lord of the town of Blouse! Listen well!!"

A man's voice resonates.

Rene replies.

"I am the one entrusted with the defense of this town as representative of my father, Rene Blouse!! What is your intention with our town!!"

The man answers back.

"We have your town completely surrounded. Be obedient and surrender! Should you surrender and vacate the town castle, we shall guarantee your life as well as the lives of your citizens and soldiers."

"Le, let me consider your proposal!!"



“D, do we have no choice but to surrender?”

Rene asks his subordinate.

The subordinate quietly nods.

“Although I’m bothered by the fact that neither horse nor falcon courier reached us... we would have no choice but to consider that the De Morgal Army lost in battle. The enemy was able to invade up to here after all. Although I couldn’t understand why, they have given us very tolerable terms. Let us just accept them.”

“U, understood. Then let’s accept them and surrender.”

—

Although Rene and his subordinates had no way of knowing, a pony express reporting the fall of the town of Dress did actually leave but was intercepted by the Rosyth Army.

There were two roads between the town of Blouse and the village of Dress which the horse couriers could’ve used at full speed. Of the two, the shortest route was used by the Rosyth Army and thus unusable by the courier.

Therefore, he had no choice but to take a detour using the second route.

However, the Rosyth Army also knew about that route.

Falcon couriers might have been more useful in this situation. However, sorcerers were precious existences ((in high demand)).

They were only deployed in the most important regions of Dress village and Blouse Town.



“Wow, to be actually surrendering...”

Raymond is bewildered while looking at the town gates opening.

The Rosythians only have 500 soldiers so holding the fort down should be a viable strategy for the Blouse garrison.

Well, the Rosythians do have ballistae and bomb spears so it wouldn’t be that much of a problem to bring down the town gates.

“Isn’t this actually a trap?”

Muzio also shows a bewildered expression.

“It probably is a trap. Surely they’d be showering us with arrows the moment we enter the gate.”

Roswald agrees in the trap theory.

“Sigh, what cowards. Fine, then I’ll go first and confirm.”

Virgar takes several of his men and enters the town.

He then shouts from the inside.

“It’s clear!”

With that, the Rosythians confirm their safety and proceed to enter the town.



“Damn it... To think they only have 500 men... it’s a blunder of a lifetime...”

Rene’s face warps into regret while he’s tied up.

You can see tears in his eyes.

“Don’t be hard on yourself, we all make one here and there.”

Raymond consoles Rene.

He’s feeling a little sorry for him.

“Uwaa! Amazing, how much garnet do they have here!?”

Muzio excitedly starts plundering.

Since the two hundred soldiers entrusted with the defense of the town are all tied up, they couldn’t offer any kind of resistance.

The Equus tribesmen started pillaging money and goods from the merchants and from the town's influential people and clansmen who could do nothing but scowl from a far. They managed to obtain a lot of spices, goldware, glassware, and various luxury goods. It's literally a mountain of treasure.

The only ones who felt relief were people of the middle class and lower. They have nothing to be plundered but wheat, salt, and their daughters after all.

Naturally speaking, even a people as uncivilized as the Equus tribe wouldn't purposely steal wheat and salt from poor people before a mountain of treasure. Or perhaps I should say that it would only be a waste of time plundering those.

Besides, the town of Blouse is a mining town.

In other words, the miners are causing huge activities. Relaxation facilities are being established just for them... In other words, there are a lot of prostitutes in the town.

The Equus tribesmen intruded upon the brothels which were forced to announce they'd give 'free' service to them.

And thus, the Rosythian occupation of the town of Blouse, save for one part, became a peaceful and reasonable affair.



"Commander! I'm happy to be able to serve under a commander like you!!"

Virgar speaks to Roswald in good humor.

He has a heap of treasure in both of his hands.

He's wearing a crown of gold. He's also wearing necklaces to the point that you yourself could feel its weight on your shoulders just by looking at him.

He's also wearing a beautiful red silk robe in place of his hemp clothing.

Although he does look like a great clansman or an upstart merchant going by the looks, because his unfortunate face and ambiance quite rightly makes a mess of his image, he only gives off an impression of a pirate that found treasure. While it's not unnecessarily wrong, it's still a sad point.

Virgar and the others are in a very good mood simply because with this much money, they could finally buy themselves out of slavery. They can even build a big house with

the leftover money.

Virgar couldn't help but fantasize about a rose-colored life in his head.

It's probable though, as one would expect, that Virgar doesn't know that he will use up all the treasure he plundered if he were to buy a huge plot of land and a big house. Furthermore, a Germanis from the sticks, frowned upon by the Adernians, like Virgar wouldn't know anything about land prices anyway.

"This is commander's share of the loot."

"No, I'm fine... snatching away people's belongings is..."

Virgar forcibly put the loot into Roswald who tried to refuse.

"Aren't you marrying the little miss (Lia-chan) after this war? If so, you'll be needing money, right?"

"Yeah... Well then, I guess I'll take it then."

Roswald got readily dazzled by the glittering treasures.

Humans are this kind of beings.



"By the way, commander, what are you doing?"

"I'm gathering documents – like those which could tell us the position of each village and the names of each chief. The annual tax records, too. Theirs is quite accurate although not to the extent like ours. There's a person here with the same idea as older brother, you see. It's honestly amazing."

"Ah no, please, you flatter me."

Rene lights up into a smile.

Roswald approaches him.

“My name is Roswald. I’m a retainer of the Ars Territory’s Lord Almis. There’s something I would like to know but... could you possibly tell me where the register of this territory’s retainers is?”

“Eh? What will you use it for?”

“We’ll be using it for recruiting talent.”

Rene raucously laughs at Roswald’s honest answer.

“No, no, there’s no way in hell I’m gonna tell you, right? Do your best and find i...”

“TELL ME!”

Roswald draws his sword and threatens Rene’s neck with the blade.

“On the third drawer from the top in father’s room!”

“Thank you very much.”

Roswald elegantly gives his thanks then heads for the room of the master of the house.



Meanwhile, Soyon has restrained the sorcerers stationed in this town. The women weren’t able to send owl couriers. It’s because they wouldn’t be able to escape death if their body gets killed while they’re in the air.

That being said, Soyon couldn’t have peace of mind so she had them restrained one by one.

“Alright, this girl’s the last one... Now then, shall we immediately go find some treasure? Let’s go, senpai!”

“Ah, no, snatching away people’s belongings is...”

Dora forcibly holds Soyon’s hands as she tried to refuse.

“What are you saying! These things are stolen by these people from the earth. What’s wrong with stealing stolen goods? Besides, everything in this town is ours now, you know. Also, aren’t you getting married soon? With Chiliarch Ron?”

“Eh, well, when this war ends...”

“Then you’ll be needing money, right?”

Soyon gets talked into plundering by Dora.



Sometime later, Raymond sent notice that the happy plunder time is now over.

It’s now time to decide on the fates of Rene and the captured soldiers, bureaucrats, and sorcerers.

By all rights, this should have been done immediately but the Equus tribesmen seemed unable to hold themselves back, so it got put off.

“The new king sees the need to dispatch bureaucrats to directly collect taxes. That’s why it’s imperative that we obtain talented people that could read, speak, and write the Cretian language.” (Raymond)

“I have something to ask regarding that. I, too, am intending to push such a policy. So does this mean that you want to take away these bureaucrats with you?” (Rene)

“That is correct.” (Raymond)

The physical persuasion immediately begins.

It’ll be complete if they attach chokers, shackles, and handcuffs on them.

First, it’s decided to turn 20 people into slaves.

In war, it’s only natural to think that all prisoners would fall into slavery. However, the Rosythians wouldn’t be able to carry a lot of them.

If they made them walk, then they risk getting the slaves killed by the horse’s speed.

They planned to load them into wagons and transport them like goods.

“Well, don’t worry much. We’ll guarantee you a wage better than the one you had

working for the Blouse Territory.”

Roswald tells them in advance since it would be a problem if they caused a revolt.

With this, they’d probably pacified those thinking of running away.

“Umm... what about our family?...”

“It’ll be fine if you exchanged them for this, right?”

“How dare you refer to me like an object!!”

Rene raises an objection, but everyone ignored him.

Next are the sorcerers.

Sorcerers are unusually troublesome beings. The highly skilled sorcerers that could perform soul-riding are able to do several other actions despite, for example, being bound in chains.

That’s why it would be impossible to forcibly drag them from here.

Therefore, they had to officially invite them.

The Rosythians called them into a private room one by one, interviewed them, and asked them to come along with them. Naturally, they baited the sorcerers with more than double their current salary.

Including the ones from Dress village, there are about ten (10) sorcerers that got interviewed who could soul-ride. However, only three decided to come with the Rosyth Army.

They then received advanced payment in the form of garnets.

Well, since even with this the Rosythians couldn’t have peace of mind, they had each sorcerer under surveillance by several soldiers just in case.

The others refused because they’re married and have children.

Even if they got reassured that their family would be exchanged with Rene, a change of environment is still not good.

Next are the relatives of the Blouse Clan including Rene.

It's been decided that all of them would be taken. They'll be valuable as ransom and negotiation material after all.

At any rate, the Blouse Clan is one of the five leading clans in the De Morgal Kingdom. They probably sent a considerable number of soldiers for the war effort.

They will take down with them a considerable number of soldiers should they pull out of this war. Even if they weren't persuaded to pull out of the war, it would still raise suspicions that the Rosythians and the Blouse clan are connected.

The garrison soldiers were so troublesome that all of them were sent to jail after their equipment were confiscated. While it would be fine to just kill them all, Raymond and the others just found it unnecessary.

Unless you kill them, there's a possibility they'd just rearm and go back into circulation.

However, since the Rosythians already settled with the policy of not killing them, they judged that they might as well push through with it to the end. Doing things half-heartedly is not good.

Besides, it'll be convenient one way or another if it becomes well known that 'your life will be spared should you surrender to the Rosyth Army.'



"Now then, Lady Soyon. If you could, would you please send an owl courier?"

"Understood. Almis will hear of the good news by tonight."

Soyon runs off after saying so.

There are no creatures that would attack an owl in the dead of night. Midnight owl couriers are the safest means of communication.

"Now then, sleep well tonight and recover your energy. Tomorrow, we'll have to crush the enemy soldiers rushing from Dress village. Then once again, we shall re-occupy that village. Afterwards, we'll adapt as per Lord Almis' instruction and as how the situation develops. Have a good night."



Afternoon of the second day.

The one who took command of the forces that recovered Dress village was Blouse... In other words, the Lord of the Blouse Territory. He's Tonino's representative to probably seize the geographic advantage.

Blouse first sent cavalry to confirm the situation at Dress village. He then made the foot soldiers march faster.

"What? The Rosyth Army has left? Their objective must be... The town of Blouse!!"

Blouse again makes the cavalry go first to the town of Blouse. The town has only two hundred soldiers defending it.

He let the two thousand infantry who were forced to march rest a while in the village. Although Blouse wanted to march through the night, it's quite reckless to do so plus the soldiers won't have the strength to go on anyway.

Blouse is disheartened at the prospect of fighting 500 enemy cavalry and could only pray that they could perform a pincer against them using just his 200 cavalry.

To adopt a poor plan that disperses his fighting potential is one of his worst as a general.

However, it couldn't be helped. His family's lives are on the line after all.

You could say that Tonino chose the wrong representative.

However, it would also be a stretch to put all the blame to Tonino. No one could have predicted, after all, that the enemy would have done such a bold move.

Furthermore, no one could have also predicted that Rene would surrender that quickly.

However, Rene was a person with no aptitude on martial matters. Besides, you could even say his decision was the best one given the amount (or lack) of information he had. It would be best to minimize casualties if you were to surrender anyhow.

All of this were just because of a series of bad luck plus them playing into the Rosyth Army's hand.

Thus, the one week war turns into its third day.

CHAPTER 69

SEVEN DAYS WAR VI

Early hours of the third day.

Blouse, who was occupying Dress village, receives the report that Blouse town has fallen.

He hurries to recover Blouse town.

The logical thing to do was first remerge with the main De Morgal army.

However, because the Blouse Clan is a march responsible for the border with the Rosyth Kingdom, he is not that familiar with the offensive capabilities of cavalry. Therefore, he figured that if the enemy numbered only 500 then his forces would be enough to take them down.

Furthermore, he's not in a mental state of being able to deliberately wait since it's his own manor that has fallen and his own clansmen captured.

Thus, while leaving behind 500 men to protect Dress village, Blouse heads for Blouse town forcing his 1500 infantry to march.



On the third day, the Rosyth Army in the town of Blouse packed up all their loot and prisoners and departed the town late in the morning.

Since they also obtained more horses, they managed to bring more loot.

Although their speed has slowed because they're carrying lots of loot, it's still way faster than infantry's marching speed.

Then around noon, they encounter the two hundred De Morgal cavalry.

"A battle immediately, huh. Nice. We'll show you the power of the Equus tribe!!"
(Muzio)

Immediately, the Equus tribesmen vigorously run off. They then take out their bows and fire simultaneously.

One by one, the De Morgal cavalry get pierced by arrows killing their momentum.

The Equus tribesmen then return their bows on their backs as they get closer with the enemy cavalry. They then wield their swords and spears and then assault the enemy.

The Equus tribesmen, born to be cavalrymen, slaughter the enemy cavalry one by one. They are using saddles provided by Almis.

The unsaddled De Morgal army simply has no chance of winning against such an enemy born to be cavalrymen, using saddles, and wielding swords and spears.

Just like that, the De Morgal cavalry is destroyed – 100 dead, 80 captured, and 20 deserted.

In contrast, the Equus tribesmen have 3 dead and 5 wounded.

It was a one-sided battle.

“I guess you don’t need us anymore, huh?” (Virgar)

“Oi, stop saying stupid things!” (Roswald)

Roswald silences Virgar.

“Now then, let’s press them for information. There’s no way there’s only 200 of them.”

Muzio interrogates the captured enemy soldiers.

They managed to make them spit out the number and current objective of Blouse’s detached force.

Although Blouse left early in the morning, there is quite a distance between Blouse town and Dress village.

Most likely the two forces will meet before the day is over.

Though the Rosythians are using wagons, they are ((still)) carrying ((considerable

amounts)) of loot and prisoners.



Early hours of the third day, Fort Terrier.

At present, the De Morgal Army War Councilmen are disagreeing considerably with each other.

Namely regarding whether they should retreat or whether they should continue the siege as is.

Since the town of Blouse has already fallen, many see the need to immediately retreat.

However, the clansmen also cannot retreat that easily.

At any rate, there is money at stake in the war.

There's no way they could retreat without even a little profit gained.

As it is, they are even fears of bankruptcy.

"Let's retreat."

Carlo, who has remained silent up until now, declares.

Everyone falls silent.

"Ar, are you sure!?"

Tonino asks Carlo with a trembling voice.

If they retreat now, then Carlo's succession would become impossible.

"It couldn't be helped, right? I think we should just retreat now before we receive even greater damage. Let's just be grateful that we still haven't suffered a lot of losses. It's not that late to regroup after we repulse the enemy from the Blouse territory, right? I think that's a better prospect than being stuck in a rut here."

The chief, Carlo, calls for retreat.

The generals, Tonino included, could only stay silent.

“Understood. Then let’s begin preparations to retreat. I’ll take up the rear.”

The council ends at Tonino’s words.

They then begin said preparations.



“It looks like the enemy has started preparations to retreat.”

“I see. Then, let’s begin preparations to pursue.”

The Rosyth army will leave behind 500 soldiers in the fort. The other 7000 soldiers take offensive positions. The vanguard consists of the Elite 500 Ars Hoplitēs.

They open the gates and begin intense pursuit at the same time the De Morgal army turned around to make their retreat.

They assault the enemy with bomb spears and gunpowder infused sling projectiles. Furthermore the gunpowder was mixed with powder of hallucinogenic grass which scatters upon impact and causes illusory flames to appear.

In the last territorial war, the only practitioner was Soyōn. This time, however, several Rosythian sorcerers are also in action.

Although the sorcerers in the De Morgal army devoted themselves into trying to cancel the illusions, the entire army has quickly fallen into panic.

Soldiers whose morale had fallen and understood that defeat was inevitable scattered about and fled the battlefield.

The army’s formation breaks and, exacerbated by the Rosyth army’s continued attacks, causes a chain reaction which severely damaged the De Morgal army.

By the time they somehow managed to shake off the Rosyth army and scurry off back into the Blouse territory, the 25,000 strong De Morgal army was reduced into 20,000 soldiers.

In order to strike another blow, the Rosyth army has invaded the Blouse territory.

The nearby villages, having heard of the De Morgal army's defeat, immediately bowed their heads and capitulated.



Night.

"It seems that the detached force has destroyed 200 enemy cavalry. It was a complete victory. Tomorrow, they will face enemy infantry. They report that after that, they would be able to rejoin us by evening."

The Rosythian clansmen gets fired up as I read out the report.

The atmosphere calls for an immediate celebration.

"That said, what is the enemy thinking dividing his force like that. Is he stupid?"

Bartolo frowns. No matter how you look at it, the enemy should not have sent his remaining 2000 infantry into Blouse town.

He should have remerged with the retreating main army at Dress village and then attack the enemy.

"It couldn't be helped. The commander of the force sent at Dress village was Blouse, after all. In other words, he's the lord of the territory."

If you were in his situation, you wouldn't be able to stand by knowing that your own territory is being ravaged. At any rate, he had four times more soldiers, so he probably thought that he should try to recover his territory anyway.

Thus, the one week war meets it's fourth day.



Fourth Day.

Ten thousand soldiers of the De Morgal army somehow managed to arrive in Dress village by night while being intensely pursued again in the morning.

There, they make camp.

All the defensive equipment there have been destroyed by the Rosyth army so they have to begin from scratch.

“Good grief, that Lord Blouse... why the hell did you sortie...”

Tonino breathes out a sigh.

He has just received the report that Lord Blouse has sortied to recover Blouse town.

However, for the De Morgal army whose present size had been greatly diminished, those 2000 soldiers are extremely valuable. Although Tonino had sent for a falcon courier and ordered Blouse to go back immediately, it doesn't seem like he's returning.”

“Lord Tonino... the reply from His Majesty King De Morgal has come...”

Tonino had asked for reinforcements from King De Morgal on the morning of the third day.

This was the reply to that request.

“I see. Your gloomy face gives away the answer, huh.”

Tonino reads the king's reply.

In summary, the King does want to come to the army's aid. However, the Rozel Kingdom seems to have invaded the country so he couldn't maneuver freely.

They are now rushing to organize an emergency army.

It says that they should hold out for a little while longer, three days at the least.

“What do we do, Lord Tonino?”

All the clansmen look at Tonino.

All of them are looking pale.

“First, let’s have the troops rest. Then, we wait for the return of Lord Blouse’s 2500 troops. After that, we’ll settle this with a field battle. Our soldiers are unsurpassed in this field up until now.”

Not only has Dress village no forts, it also had its defense equipment destroyed.

Rather than fight here, it would be better to just settle it in the fields.

“Will the enemy wait for us?”

“The enemy too probably won’t be able to move until their detached force arrive, right? In other words, the victor will be decided on whose force returns first.”



(Almis POV)

In the Rosyth Army

“Sakura, I have been worrying about I’d somehow lose because you’re here. However, you’ve shown what you’re made of. As I thought, you’re not an unlucky horse, right? Right?”

I talk to Sakura.

Since she had no name, I named her Sakura.

I named her because horsemeat is..... It’s a joke, don’t bite me.

Her mane reminds me of the sun which is associated with Japan, and from there I got the name. Since she’s a girl after all.

.....Although she’s forbidden to scatter easily.

“Almis, Bartolo and the others call for you.”

“I understand. I’ll be right there.”

I return to camp with Tetra.

“Will we attack as it is?”

“If we strike now then we’ll be able to defeat them!”

Ordovices and Perm press me with excited faces.

Actually, the Rosyth Army is currently riding the momentum. Right now, I believe the men could even win against an enemy with twice as many soldiers as ours.

However, I think it’s safer to err on the side of caution. A cornered mouse will bite a cat after all.

Since it seems like it would take quite a considerable time for the enemy’s reinforcements to arrive, it would be fine to just wait and see how the situation develops, right?

“For the meantime, let’s wait for the detached force. They’ll probably arrive tonight after all. Besides, the soldiers are probably tired from chasing the enemy for a whole day. Let’s have them rest soundly today. Let’s also serve some liquor.”

“Wow, that’s our supreme commander. I can’t wait for the liquor!”

Bartolo says while drinking some liquor.

Have some self-control, stupid.



Noon.

The Rosyth Detached Force and the De Morgal Army headed by Blouse are glaring at each other.

The sun is shining brightly over the two armies.

“I am the commander of this force, Raymond. We have your wives, sons, and daughters in custody. I assure you their safety. If you want them to return safely, then quietly surrender. If you would even like, would you care to defect to our country?” (Edit, check plural forms.)

“Who would!? We’ll make battle and immediately take them back from you!”

Negotiation promptly breaks down.

Raymond was troubled whether to kill one of Blouse’s relatives but banished the thought since it would only make Blouse even angrier.

“Now then, what shall we do...”

It was their first normal fight.

They were completely overwhelming in the earlier sieges so before they could fight, the enemy had already vacated their defenses and surrendered.

In the battle against the 200 cavalry, the Equus tribesmen did all the fighting so there was no need to specifically give orders.

However, this time, the enemy is 2,000 infantry. It won’t be as simple as before.

“Don’t worry. I’ve thought of a plan.”

Roswald speaks of his strategy. It’s a very straightforward tactic.

“Nice. Not bad. This plan would be better than doing a more complicated one.”

Muzio grins.

Thus, the battle begins.

Under the watchful eye of the sun...

The Equus tribesmen draw as close as possible to the enemy hopelights. They then fire their arrows simultaneously.

The arrows pour like rain unto the hoplites.

“Rout the enemy!!”

At Blouse’s order, the hoplites assault the Equus tribesmen.

The tribesmen evade and retreat while continuing their barrage of arrows.

Naturally speaking, humans can't catch up to horses.

Having been forced to march here and now being forced to run back and forth, the hoplites immediately lose their stamina. Their movements withered and their formation became disordered.

"Attack!!"

The Rosythians counter with the Equus at the center, Roswald and Virgar's group at the right flank, and Raymond's group at the left.

With the hoplites exhausted, the De Morgal Army has gotten themselves surrounded, the Rosythians closing in on the front and the left and right flanks.

The formation completely collapses and the soldiers desperately begin running for their own lives.

"Like we'd let you get away!!"

Thus, the Rosythians went into intense pursuit. In the blink of an eye, the hoplites turn into a mountain of corpses.

"Now then, Lord Blouse. Be obedient and stop resisting. We'll let you meet with your son soon."

Roswald stabs the back of the horse Blouse is riding. The horse struggles wildly throwing off its rider whom Virgar catches skillfully.

"We've captured the enemy general – Blouse!!"

Just like that, the Rosyth Detached Force easily won the battle.



Night.

The two Rosythian armies recombine roughly the same time the De Morgal army barricaded in Dress village learned of Blouse' huge defeat near Blouse town.

“You did an excellent job, Raymond.”

“Haha, well, it’s not me who did all the hard work. Everything’s thanks to great efforts of Lord Muzio and Lord Roswald.”

Raymond grinningly answers.

Practically speaking, Raymond didn’t do much in the operation. If I had to say, then he was the one responsible for controlling the Equus tribesmen.

“These are the spoils of war.”

Raymond shows the treasures, slaves (bureaucrats), sorcerers, and the Blouse clansmen he obtained.

Blouse then begrudgingly says:

“Listen here, I swear my son will definitely cut off the head of everyone of you here...”

“How would he be able to do that? With all of you Blouse clansmen taken prisoner, won’t your son not be able to move, right?”

One or two prisoners might have been different, but all of them are here captured.

Honestly, how can you fight squarely while worrying about the entirety of your clan.

“Well, anyway, everything will end at the next battle. Everyone, prepare yourselves for tomorrow!!”

The Rosyth Army erupts into cheers.



In the other side, the De Morgal Army is engulfed in a funeral-like gloomy atmosphere.

“Lord Tonino, we’ve had more deserters. Should we chase after them?”

“...The soldiers we’ve sent to chase after some seemed to have deserted too. Just leave them be.”

One by one, the soldiers of the De Morgal army have begun deserting.

The morale is at its worst.

Reinforcements are hopeless.

“Lord Tonino, Lord Carlo seems to have summoned a war council. Your attendance is expected.”

“Lord Carlo, is it? It’s unusual for that person to propose something... I understand.”



“First, how much of our army’s force remain?”

“Around 9,000.”

Tonino answers.

“The enemy’s forces?”

“7,000”

Carlo nods in satisfaction at Tonino’s inquiry.

He then asks:

“Is there anyone here who still believes we could win against the Rosyth army? If there is, then please lay out a tangible plan.”

Everyone remained hanging their heads in shame. Nobody could answer.

No matter how superior their numbers or the quality of their equipment are, they most definitely lose in esprit d’corps. Aren’t the soldiers here already running for their lives even before the battle?

Once the battle begins, there’s a possibility the army would completely collapse.

“Then there’s no choice but to capitulate, huh. Let’s call for peace.”

The clansmen are shaken into attention, fixing their gazes into Carlo.

“Lord Carlo! If we proceed with such in our current situation, we would be forced to accept extremely unfavorable terms. We could even possibly be forced to hand over the entirety of the Blouse territory!!”

“That’s true, yes. However, if we lose, we would be forced to accept even worse terms. Besides, our country is surrounded by the Rozel, Fardam, and Gillbed Kingdoms. If we lose even more soldiers here, then our whole country is sure to follow. Even the incompetent me can understand that. We can’t win, yes? Then we shall ask for peace.”

There isn’t anyone who could object against Carlo.



(Almis POV)

Lord Almis, thank you very much for granting this opportunity to discuss peace.”

“No, please. I think it’s in our best interests for my and your country to reconcile after all.”

I amicably receive Crown Prince Carlo to the best of my abilities. He’s the crown prince of a high-ranking country after all.

“First, what do you say to a one year truce?”

Hmm, this means they have no intention to abandon their policy of pushing south.

Well, I can understand why they would not want to give up on the policy.

It would still be a one year truce even if I managed to destroy their army in battle.

Furthermore, it would be a different story if we would be invading deeper into their territory, however, we didn’t bring any siege equipment.

We could also use the siege equipment the enemy left behind. However, it would take time to pick them up then return here.

It’s an impossible plan.

I should take this up and anticipate and prepare for this one year.

“I understand. Then there’s no problem with a one-year truce. Now then, regarding reparations...”

“We shall give you the whole Blouse territory. Furthermore, as indemnity, we shall pay you in a ten year span, three times the amount you spent on this war.”

A sudden high ball, huh.

Nevertheless, the Blouse territory has completely capitulated after all so it’s a reasonable compensation.

However...

We won’t be able to hold on to such a huge border.

Most probably, Carlos is thinking of taking it back later so he suggested this offer.

“We’re fine with the territory’s western half plus Blouse town’s environs. In exchange, we request 20 blacksmiths. We want iron forge specialists.”

“...That would be fine. Then we shall give your country 20 blacksmiths.”

With this, we’ll be able to mass produce iron. Our country’s blacksmiths are still inexperienced after all.

“Furthermore, we’d be fine with just twice our expenses as compensation but, we would like for you to pay in lump-sum. In exchange, we shall return all Blouse clansmen prisoners to you.”

“.....Haa, I understand.”

With this you won’t be able to shirk payment.

Last is...

“Also, we would like to ask two favors from you. First, before the performance of this agreement, we want you and the Blouse clansmen to stay in our country.”

“That’s only natural, yes. That would be fine. Then the next favor?”

“The next one is...”

Carlo’s eyes widen as I state my next favor.

“Uwa, you really have a bad personality huh...”

“I’m honored by your praise.... We’ll, I’m the next king after all.”

CHAPTER 70

SEVEN DAYS WAR VII

For me, the winning conditions are that I become King and Julia becomes mine.

It's not like these conditions are difficult to achieve.

If I had forcibly married Julia, even without some accomplishments under my belt, I would become king.

The real problem is what comes after.

As expected, who would follow as new king a stranger whose ability you don't even know.

Furthermore, would Regal DeBell just sit quietly and allow that to happen?

The answer is no.

We'll fall into civil war.

In order to obtain peace after victory, it is necessary that I win through this civil war.

This civil war's victory condition is to force all the clansmen to submit to me.

It's not like it's necessary to destroy Regal. It would be fine if he would just submit to me. That however is impossible.

Now then, it will be a civil war but...

Winning won't be difficult.

Rosythian crown territories, royal soldiers, plus Ars soldiers.

If I add all of these to the Ars factions' soldiers then all of them would be enough to bring down the DeBell faction.

However, another problem is up until when the hell should I fight until it could be

considered a victory? Furthermore, I'll be risking exhaustion.

It's not like you can clearly identify the enemy.

There's a chance that some people in the Ars faction might grow uncomfortable seeing me on the throne and thus betray me.

There are also those from the Neutral faction who continue to give vague answers when asked who they will support.

You won't be able to know who on earth they'd support..... or when they would betray someone.

It's also said that the time limit until a foreign country might intervene is around one month.

Will it really end in just one month?

It'll be a mess if another country were to intervene.

The Belvedere Kingdom, the De Morgal Kingdom, the Ebill Kingdom, the Equus tribe...

They won't hold themselves back. Under the pretense of expropriation, they'd probably come and steal until exhausted the kingdom's food provisions; and kidnap then sell into slavery our citizens caught in the confusion.

Rather than the war, they'd probably focus on doing those things.

In the first place, the battlefield of a civil war is naturally one's own country. You'd be burning down your own country's land and would have your own country's soldiers kill each other.

That is a civil war.

After this ends, I wonder what will I have left in my hands?

As for me, what's necessary is not victory. Victory is just the pre-requisite.

More than that, I need to win while limiting the damage, limiting the deaths, and if possible without causing war. That's all there is to it.

In order to achieve that, I need achievements befitting of kingship. I'll need to preemptively strike the DeBell Faction. I also need a just cause to do just that. Furthermore, I need to prepare my troops without, as much as possible, giving the DeBell faction an opportunity to prepare.

With that, the level of difficulty has increased in one stroke.

In this war with the De Morgal Kingdom, what I wanted was an achievement befitting of kingship.

However... To receive a sudden stroke of good luck such as this. Well, no, I actually forcibly made it happen.

I never thought I'd be able to successfully put all things in place.



Fifth Day

The 1000 remaining soldiers of the Rosyth army promptly pulled out from the Blouse territory.

Then, they immediately arrive in the Ars Territory.

They were welcomed with cheers and applause by the Ars Territory's citizens.

"Then, Ron. I'll give you 500. Be on standby here in the Ars territory."

"Understood."

I temporarily pull out 500 from the Rosyth army and assign them to Ron.

Then, I talk to Muzio.

"Hey, are you going home now?"

"N? The contract has ended so we're going home. Would it be better if we stay?"

"No, it's fine if you go home... However, if you stay, then I promise to show you something even more interesting."

I grinningly laugh.

Muzio nods with a perplexed expression on his face.

“I understand. Then we’ll stay for a little longer. Well, there’s still the conferral of honors, after all. I won’t be able to go home without my close friend’s big moment.”



Sixth Day

At last, the Rosyth army has arrived at the Rosyth Royal Palace. The citizens welcome them with great applause.

“As expected of Lord Almis!”

“Iya, so wonderful!!”

Here come the former DeBell factionmen rushing to Almis’ side. They are clansmen who didn’t even participate in the war. They had heard of the Rosyth army’s victory so they immediately changed sides.

While politely dealing with them, Almis holds audience with the king. They are surrounded by the clansmen who participated in the war, their families, the former DeBell turncoats, and the DeBell faction members who came to wait-and-see how things would go.

Furthermore, they are surrounded by the citizens living near the palace.

“Now then, oh Almis Ars. You have faced great hardships in this war. What do you desire as reward?”

“Well then...”

While being attentively watched by the clansmen, Almis firmly declares:

“I desire the hand of Princess Julia, this country, and the crown.”

The clansmen fall silent.

King Rosyth immediately hands over his crown, scepter, and mantle to Julia standing on his side.

Then, he pushes her from behind and declares:

“Behold, take as you please.”

Almis immediately rushes to Julia and kisses her without minding the people’s gazes.

“With this, you’ve become mine. I won’t ever let you go, you know?”

“...Yes. I know.”

Julia sweetly smiles.

Almis then takes the crown and scepter while Julia puts the mantle on his back.

He then stands before the great clansmen.

He raises his scepter and is met with great cheers.

“”Long Live the New King!!! Long Live the New King!!””

The clansmen who knew about Almis’ succession beforehand raise cheers and applause.

The neutral faction are left with bewildered expressions while the turncoats show their relief that their decisions were correct.

Finally, the DeBell faction’s clansmen were seething with rage.

Almis then violently bangs the staff into the ground.

Everyone falls silent.

“Ladies and Gentlemen. The war is not yet over. We have yet to purge our country with the De Morgal army from within. Lord Carlo!”

“Yes, yes, King Rosyth.”

Carlo steps forward with a seemingly irked face. One by one, he reads out names. They are names of DeBell faction members headed by Regal himself. The turncoats' names were not read out.

A large part of them were not here but those whose names were called out showed uneasy expressions wondering about what was happening.

Tetra, with an expressionless face, then comes forward to declare:

"The aforementioned names are people who have sold out this country to the De Morgal Kingdom and secretly colluded with them against us. In other words, they are traitors. Now then, what are we to do with them, King Rosyth?"

Almis laughs and answers.

"The penalty for treason is death. That's only natural, yes?"

Immediately, the number of DeBell turncoats multiplied rushing to Almis so as to cling for mercy.

They've understood that they're to be executed and thus immediately went over the fence in the confusion.

"It-it's a misunderstanding! We humbly support the succession of the new king! Long live the new king!! Long li—"

A turncoat's head goes flying.

Bartolo draws first blood.

"I'm sorry but there's no seats left for you in this ship."

The clansman's head tumbles around like a ball.

All the DeBell Clansmen-traitors-who witnessed such simultaneously and immediately run for their lives.

However, they are intercepted by imperial guards who disguised themselves as citizens.

One by one, they were executed.

Almis surveys the other clansmen stricken with fear.

“Now then, is there anyone here who hold dissatisfaction with my succession?”

Nobody answers.

“Is there anyone here who are traitors?”

Nobody answers.

“Is there anyone here thinking of helping out the traitors?”

Nobody answers.

“Well then, is there anyone here opposed to having the traitors executed starting now?”

Nobody answers.

Almis nods in satisfaction.

“Bartolo! Raymond!”

Almis summons the two.

The two retainers kneel in front of Almis.

“What is your wish, oh our King?”

Almis declares while looking at the two.

“All the soldiers here are together 6,000 strong. Bartolo, Raymond, I’ll bestow each of you a thousand soldiers. Go and kill all the traitors. I’ll take the remaining 4,000 and go kill Regal DeBell.”

“Yes sir!!”

The two deeply bow their heads.

Then, Bartolo asks Almis.

“By the way, our esteemed king. Would it be fine for us to execute up to nine degrees of the traitors’ kin?”

“Yes, there would be no problem with that.”

“Even women and children?”

“So long as they’re within nine degrees of consanguinity.”

Bartolo nods, satisfied with Almis’ declaration.

Thus, Almis rushes over to Muzio.

Muzio, naturally surprised, cannot help but show a dumbfounded expression.

“My dear friend. Certainly, the next king also inherits our alliance, yes? Well then, won’t you come work for my country once again?”

Muzio laughs and answers.

“Naturally! My dear friend. Let’s take down our enemies together!!”

Thus, the Seven Days War.

The sixth day ends and the seventh day begins.

CHAPTER 71

SEVEN DAYS WAR VIII

When a new king ascends to the throne, a purge is sure to follow.

This purge must be done thoroughly.

If It were done half-heartedly, rather than striking fear, it would instead cause resentment.

A purge is necessary so that the stability of one's administration can be ensured. Furthermore, it would also ensure that your successor can rule without worry after your own demise.

However, it's not like a purge is an absolute necessity.

For example, Julius Caesar, showing great forbearance, gave pardon to his political opponents.

However, you might also say that's also the reason why he was killed by the knives of republicanism.

I'm not conceited as to consider myself possessing greater genius in governance and politics than Caesar. That's why I don't intend to pardon the DeBell faction.

Now then, the problem is where do I draw the line in forgiving and condemning.

If I kill all the opposition, then I'll be imposing politics of fear.

Conversely, if I forgive too much, then they'd begin to think "this guy'll forgive me in the end."

First, I would have to forgive those from the DeBell faction who have showed allegiance to me.

I had the names of the DeBell faction members who had changed sides to me before the announcement removed from the execution list.

It's common occurrence for clansmen to switch allegiance to a different power depending on changing circumstances. For them, what's more important is, rather than country, their status as clansmen, their territory, and their own families. It's something one must understand.

Second, I would have to deal with those who changed sides after the execution announcement. They're the one's I'm troubled with.

Letting these opportunistic wretches, so to speak, live is to turn a blind eye to future trouble.

That said, the same could be said for those who changed sides immediately after my victory against the De Morgal Kingdom. All of them are just opportunists.

The problem is how do I separate the good from the bad opportunist. What's the difference between these two groups of turncoats?

Let's just be blunt. There's no difference between the two. Both groups are essentially opportunists regardless of difference in circumstance.

In a word, one group was just unlucky.

Then how about I forgive them? If I went with that, then I'll essentially be letting a lot of De Bell faction members live.

To have large numbers of potential rebels within the country borders is simply bungling.

You can even go further and reason that you could carry the political situation more smoothly as king if you had few great clansmen as possible.

That's why I'll have them dead.

While we're at it, we'll have the loyalty of the early turncoats tested. We'll have them kill the condemned turncoats so we can clearly discern the birds from the beasts.^[TLN1]

Certainly, even an opportunist will quickly show their true intentions if you have them kill their former colleagues by their very own hands.

Now then, should we forgive the women and children?

This is another point of contention.

I personally want to spare them. It's unreasonable, not to mention, pitiful to have people who have done no wrong killed after all.

Furthermore, it's not like the children had a choice in what lives they were born in.

However, in the end, I'll have them killed.

There are two reasons.

First, it was because I was persuaded by Bartolo and Raymond.

It's related to turning a blind eye to future troubles. Children today would grow into adults someday in the future. They will surely bear grudges of having their families killed, etc. etc.

I couldn't help but see the point.

Then, the next reason. It's because I have an example of this so close to home. Yes, it's about Tetra.

Although King Ferrum had thoroughly killed Tetra's family, he had let her go.

And so, it bit him back in the future and got killed by me.

How can I definitely say that it can't helped but for me to do such things?

In the end, I reached this conclusion.

I'll probably regret this conclusion in the future. No, I'm actually regretting it already.

I keep wondering if this was the right thing to do.

However... compared to me dying as well as Julia and Tetra, and my children getting killed, this conclusion and any regret it carries are to some extent less objectionable. That's what I thought.



The new king's royal orders were quickly disseminated throughout the country.

First, the rebels are to be executed.

Second, the rebels' collaborators are to be executed

Third, those who manage to apprehend or kill a rebel, regardless of social status, shall be rewarded.

Fourth, while the general rule is to also execute the retainers of the rebels, those who cooperate with the execution of the rebels shall have their own punishments commuted.

The first to move were Bartolo and Raymond.

The two went separately, invading the DeBell clansmen's territories one by one, and executing them.

Those in the vanguard are the former DeBell clansmen who had changed sides immediately after the war. Because they have shown their allegiance to Almis before the announcement of the execution list, they got pardoned in the nick of time.

There's a reason why they were made to lead the vanguard.

'If you want to be forgiven, show some effort.'

If it would seem like they'd change their minds, they'd be crushed by the main forces following them from behind led by Bartolo, Raymond, and the others.

They would have to kill their former comrades if they want to live.

Second to mobilize were Ron and the others who just received the royal orders.

Leading 500 soldiers, they invaded the DeBell territory ahead of me.

The new king is leading 4000 men and advance directly towards the DeBell territory while displaying such scene to the citizens.

Last to mobilize were the retainers of the DeBell faction.

Having learned that the DeBell clansmen have really been condemned to death, they immediately mobilized their own troops and personally led them into attacks against their very own lords.

Indeed, a good two-thirds of the clansmen were arrested by their very own retainers' hands.



“Please! Spare even just the child... he hasn’t even reached three years of age!”

A woman pleads Bartolo. She prostrates herself, begging for mercy.

Bartolo answers while drinking his liquor.

“I very much understand how you feel. I, too, have a little daughter at home after all. I really want to do you a favor.”

Then, Bartolo throws away the bottle and unsheathes his sword.

“However, it’s my principle to not mix personal feels with my job. Just following the new king’s orders – send both mother and child together to the other world.”

He slashes at the woman.

The woman glares at Bartolo as she bleeds to death.

“What... in the world was our sin?...”

“Hmm, let’s see. You had the sin of marrying a rebel. As for the child, he has sinned just by being born into this world.”

Bartolo then pierces the child held by the woman.

Just like that, a young soul loses its life.

“Go to hell...”

One last curse of defiance and the woman dies.

Bartolo takes another bottle of liquor to drink anew.

“Stupid, there’s no way a loyal retainer like me would go anywhere except heaven.”



Bartolo continues his advance.

Then, a subordinate rush over to report.

“General! The lord of the territory just ahead has refused our army’s entry!”

“N? Just ahead is... if I recall correctly, a neutral faction territory, huh. If I’m not mistaken, they have marriage ties with the next rebel. Then, it can’t be helped.”

Bartolo drinks the liquor dry.

“Continue the advance. Also, tell the lord that he should cooperate if he doesn’t want to die.”

“Would that be fine?”

“Aren’t collaborators also condemned to death?”

The lord has again refused entry.

Thus, Bartolo annihilates them and eradicates the lord’s bloodline.



“It’s quite anticlimactic, huh.”

Raymond mutters.

In front of him is a tied-up rebel, deceived and killed by his own retainers.

This is already the third time this happened. Because of that, he still hasn’t fought even once.

Well, it's kind of a blessing in disguise as war is not one of Raymond's specialties.

He walks closer to the tied-up clansman and cuts off the head.

"Lord Raymond, Would it be possible for me to humbly ask one thing?"

"What?"

The retainer that betrayed the rebel foppishly asked.

"About the rebel's wife and daughter... would it be fine if I do as I please with them?"

"No. Kill them immediately!"

The retainer promptly runs away in confusion at Raymond's yell.

Raymond spits at the sight.

"Tsch. Low-life."



There are around 200 soldiers who have barricaded themselves within the DeBell residence. Those in command were completely relative DeBell clansmen. The non-relatives have all turned on them.

From the very beginning, Regal, who had refused to provide troops for the war with the reason of protecting the borders, had already 500 soldiers in position in his territory.

He had thought that Almis will fail.

Regal's plan was to gather his clansmen after Almis' failure, ambush the pursuing De Morgal army, and to look like cleaning after Almis' mess.

In the first two days of the war, Almis was being pressured in the fort severely outnumbered. However, all of a sudden, Almis made a huge breakthrough. By the time Regal decided to join the war and hurry into the field, Almis had won magnificently and peace had already been established.

That however worked in his favor because he still has his 500 soldiers with him by the time he learned of the royal order to subjugate the rebels.

He'll have to somehow stop the incoming punitive force and exploit that moment to emigrate to another country. Just as he was planning that, 300 of his men turned against him.

Thus, without being able to even attempt to escape, he got cornered. His residence immediately got surrounded by 800 soldiers, 300 turncoats plus 500 from the Ars territory that marched in advance.

Even now, he's unsure whether the remaining 200 would turn on him. He's stuck between a rock and a hard place.

However, again in his favor, the royal order demanded all rebels and all their relatives are condemned to death. Because of that, the unity of the DeBell clan only strengthened.

They'd rather not go extinct.



"Things are somehow happening a little too fast for me to keep up so... please enlighten me. Lord Chiliarch. Is it fine that we don't proceed with the assault?"

"Well, for now it's enough that we just keep up the encirclement. We'd be risking unnecessary damage after all. We'll begin the full-blown assault after leader... ((rather)), the new king arrives."

Ron gazes at the DeBell clan estate.

Inside the residence are important documents such as the register of the names of all the village chiefs in the territory.

Burning those very important documents would be bad. Furthermore, they would have to save the last enemy for Almis.

That's what Ron thinks.

"Well, it won't change the fact that we'll win. Wouldn't it just be fine to take it easy?"

“I want to get an achievement though...”

“It’s not like getting or not getting an achievement would make a difference though? From what I see, it’ll take just a few years more until you’ll get promoted to chiliarch.”

Joseph’s eyes sparkle at Ron’s words.

“Really!?”

“Yeah, really. When I become a general, I’ll make you my second-in-command. That’s if I don’t find someone even more excellent than you.”

“Alright!” (Also hooray, wohoo, yahoo, yehey, woot, I did it, etc.)

Joseph is overjoyed.

His promotion, however, would depend on Ron becoming a general...

Night of the Sixth Day.

Gilberto has been thinking.

What does he have to do to save himself.

Although it’s quite late, humans are creatures that want to be saved no matter what. Even if just his life.

Then Gilberto had an ephiphany.

He thought there’s no way that Almis would be capable of such senseless brutality. Almis even apologized deeply for the previous scuffle between their two clans.

Almis would probably forgive him if he apologized earnestly.

As such, it’s decided.

Gilberto hurriedly gathers the troops under his charge.



(Almis' POV)

Seventh Day, Around Sunset.

I finally arrive at the DeBell territory.

I conscientiously appealed to the citizens along the way.

All of these to convey not only to the great clansmen but to all people from the citizens even up to the slaves my succession as king.

I was especially conscientious with the DeBell territory's citizens.

Several of them joined me on my march towards Regal.

I didn't drive them away. They too probably have several grudges they want to finish. I very much understand what they feel.

"Ron!"

"Leade... no uh, my King! We have cornered Regal DeBell!"

I rush over to Ron.

It seems he had held up the siege for me until the end.

"It's not like you doing the final act would be a problem. Well, it's fine already."

I then face the DeBell estate.

Beside me is Ron, also Gram and Roswald acting as flagsmen.

Coming along behind us are the sorcerers Soyon, Lulu, Tetra, and also Julia.

Bartolo and Raymond still hasn't arrived.

However, it's probably fine to start now.

“Gentlemen-soldiers working for the DeBell Clan. All of you have no crime whatsoever. If you immediately hand over the people of the DeBell Clan, I suppose I shall pardon all of you!!”

A ruckus immediate occurs inside the DeBell estate. It seems a mutiny has quickly occurred.

After a while, the gate opens slowly.

All the DeBell clansmen are being brought out while bound by rope.

And thus, the last one to come out... Gilberto was somehow not bound up.

What the heck is...

I see. He sold out. He sold out after I arrived because... he concluded that he wouldn't be able to save himself without directly negotiating with me because of the royal orders demanding their deaths.

This is one stubborn fellow, huh. Probably trying to make up to me, since he heard about the clansmen that got executed, I guess.

Gilberto runs up to me.

“My new king! I have unwillingly served Regal. He was a relative, so I thought it couldn't be helped. However, once I heard he had rebelled, I thought I had to draw the line. That's why here I am presenting to you, our new king, the men of the DeBell clan, all tied up. That's why, please spare my life, gg guah?”

Gilberto looks with a perplexed expression at the sword that sprung up his own chest.

“Sorry, my hand slipped.”

Roswald mutters.

“You always slip your hand, huh. Just like that time with the refugees.

Well, this is such an unfortunate incident. I guess it couldn't be helped. Sorry bout that, Gilberto.”

Gilberto collapses in a thud.

Now then, next would be...

I walk towards Regal DeBell.

Regal depressingly hangs his head.

Well, I can sympathize. He got betrayed by the people and relatives he had trusted with all confidence.

If he had advice from Bermet, he probably would have a much less objectionable end.

Well, it was me, however, who got rid of Bermet.

“Sorry. It’s not like I harbor that much hate against you. Although because of you, my retainers lost their limbs; it’s not like they had died. Though there’s anger, it’s not to the extent to warrant your death. However, I desired Julia. You, too, desired Julia. The two of us won’t yield. Therefore, this is the natural consequence. You are a hindrance to me so I’ll kill you.”

I raise my sword.

However, Regal suddenly moved.

He had prostrated himself before me, bowing his head to the ground with great force.

I smell the stench of excrement from him.

“Ple, please!... Spare even just my life...”

Regal is reduced to sobbing and begging for his life.

What you should be doing is pleading for the lives of your companions, yes? Good grief...

“Haa, what a letdown...”

I lay down my sword.

There's no need for me to go out of my way and execute him here.

Besides, come to think of it, it would be a waste if I were to kill him here.

I think it would be better to hold an official execution in the distant future.

“For the meantime, lock him up in the dungeons.”

I turn my back on Regal.

Regal raises his head, and as if misunderstanding something, shouts:

“Tha, thank you very much!!”

You'll still be executed you know?

"Now then, Julia. Shall we go home?"

I smile at Julia. Julia reciprocates and holds my hand.

“Just the two of you is not allowed.”

Tetra quips.

“Ah, sorry, sorry.”

I embrace the two by the shoulder and leave the place with them.

At that moment.

[illegible]

I hear laughter.

That of children. This is... not my first time hearing this.

Yes. That time, I heard this in my previous life just before I got ran over.

Am I the only one who's hearing this?

I look around restlessly, surveying my surroundings with a perplexed face.

No, it's not only me.

Julia is also looking around.

In other words, the only people able to hear them are me and Julia.

——Boring——

——What a let-down——

I can clearly hear the voices. This is the same as my thinking language... Japanese!!

“Almis, do you hear? It just said ‘Boring’...”

“So you hear it in Adernian, huh.”

‘Divine Protection of Language’ and ‘Diving Protection of the Divine Word’ have the same effect.

——However, we succeeded with the rival. Let's settle this now. We've succeeded our objectives——

——It's a success, yes?——

High-pitched children's voice. You can't tell apart whether it's a boy's or a girl's.

——Then shall we confiscate?——

A chill runs down my spine.

I turn my head behind me in confusion.

Blood rushes to my face.

Regal, on the otherhand,..... is emitting blood.

He's emitting blood from the pores of his skin. What in the world is happening...

“This inversion..... I, I've don't know about this. I I've never seen this before... What is, eh, what is this?”

Julia shows a frightened expression.

I embrace the shaking Julia while glaring at Regal's dead corpse.

—Regal DeBell dies from a disease where the body emits blood from the pores on the whole body. Herewith, the Seven Days War ends—

An excerpt from the 'Romano Empire Founding Chronicles' Author: Yang Qingming

CHAPTER 72

THE CORONATION

AND THE WEDDING CEREMONY

The Marriage Ceremony and the Coronation is hurriedly about to be conducted.

Although I did take the Crown for King Rosyth, it's not like I've officially become the king.

I still haven't done the necessary steps such as asking the gods permission to be king.

That's why we have to first formally hold the marriage ceremony. That's the important thing. Unless we do that, the legitimacy of my succession cannot be secured.

All great clansmen from within the country plus important people from the surrounding nations have come to give their congratulations.

Even the second prince from the De Morgal Kingdom had come to give his country's congratulations as well as a celebratory gift.

We still have to negotiate with them once all of this ends.

The Equus king too has come to give his gifts and congratulations bringing his third wife who had already gotten well.

To my surprise, the people from the Cretian colonial city-states such as in the Adernia Peninsula have also come to give us congratulations.

I didn't think that the Rosyth kingdom was really that big of a country but...

"That's not it. The Rosyth Kingdom boasts the largest population amongs the polities in the southern Adernia Peninsula. It's just that we've been embroiled in the succession problem as well as problems with powerful great clansmen, so we couldn't project our power. Now, since the succession problem had been resolved, we're on the process of rapid centralization of power."

Tetra explains for me.

Certainly, the power balance in the Adernia Peninsula have been shaken greatly. By the war with the De Morgal Kingdom.

As for me, the most suprising thing is that the Rozel Kingdom had sent an envoy.

They're a big country that controls the southern part of Galia and the northern part of the Adernia Peninsula.

Their population exceeds 3,000,000. To think that a country on that scale would purposely send an envoy.

The envoy was a black haired woman.

From her skin color and facial feature, you can see that she's a person from the Far-east.

If you went east from Gallia where the Rozel Kingdom is located, you'll find Germanis.

Germanis is a region that intermingles with equestrian tribes so there's nothing strange even if a person from the Far-east comes.

It just left a mysterious impression.



The marriage ceremony is happening uneventfully.

Julia is wearing a pure white dress.

I was so sure, however, that she would be wearing a lavender dress matching her hair.

White too, however, looks very good on her.

She's as beautiful as a great work of art. Much like a great treasure for the world to see.

This time, Tetra would be doing the congratulatory address. It was Julia the last time, so it's kind of a return gift.

“Do you two swear to believe in each other and aid each other no matter what from now on until eternity?”

“”We swear””

“Oh God of Heaven, Earth, and the Sky; Oh God that leads, helps, and watches over us from the whirls of chaos in this world; May you grant your blessings upon these two in marriage.”

Tetra pauses for a while, then, with her usual expressionlessness, says seemingly happy:

“May your love be blessed by the faeries. I pray that your love goes on for eternity... Now then, your compact please.”

I pull Julia towards me, raise her veil, and give her a kiss.

As we separate, Julia makes a happy smile.

“I won’t let you go till eternity.”

“Me too.”

We kiss once more as the people cheer.



We begin the coronation immediately after the wedding ceremony.

While I’ll be using the crown and the scepter I inherited from King Rosyth, I had a new mantle for my personal use made.

Cloth, in contrast to the crown and scepter, ages very horribly. Therefore, it had been custom for a new one to be made for a new king.

When I was pondering about who shall make the new mantle, Ains offered his services.

The finished product was a purple mantle. It seems the color was called shellfish purple and I had to shell out an impossible amount of money for it. ^[TLN1]

However, I was quite pleased with it because it's made with silk and doesn't cause an unpleasant feeling when worn.

The coronation is an extremely troublesome program.

First, King Rosyth is slain. (In a dramatic sense)

Then, I slay that flat-faced mask wearing monster... or rather flat faced clansman who killed King Rosyth. (In a dramatic sense)

Then, I take back King Rosyth's royal crown and scepter then I handed them over to a goddess ((actress)).

I then face her and kneel, after which she puts the crown on my head and grants me the scepter.

Then she drapes the mantle on my back.

Finally, I shout:

"I, Almis Ars Rosyth, shall declare my succession to the gods as the 20th King Rosyth!"

With this, my coronation ends successfully.

By the way, the play/drama can be traced from the founding of the Rosyth Royal House 500 years ago when the first Rosyth King, with his companions, drove away his father's flat-faced clan enemy.

In this connection, those companions were the first kings of the first six kingdoms such as the De Morgal, Fardam, Gilbed, and the Belvedere Kingdoms.

With the Rosyth Kingdom, there are seven kingdoms altogether.

When you consider that, the Rosyth Royal House has quite the long history, huh.

As for the play/drama's cast, the first King was me; the father was the former King Rosyth; the goddess was Julia; the flat-faced clan were played by a part of the imperial guard and some great clansmen who were up for it.

In any case, it's good that it ended peacefully.

At the same time I thought that, I feel the wind whirl up.

The people look up, scream, and begin running for their lives.

What in the hell?

I look up. There's nothing there.

Did they see a UFO? I want to see one too.

".....Almis. Behind you."

Tetra points behind me.

I turn around.

The face of a falcon comes into view.

It has a body of a lion and a huge pair of wings growing from it's back.

Its fur is a beautiful golden yellow color... it's Griffon-sama!!

"I've come to give my congratulations. Here's a gift. Send some liquor later."

Griffon-sama drops a huge deer from his mounth and then points his blood-stained beak at me.

"Why in the..."

"It was I who have pushed you into this after all. I've come to take responsibility. I've appreciated it for a while but, well, I still don't understand the vows of coupling you creatures called humans have. Even though it's a done story if you had just immediately copulated with that female."

You're to wild, the way you put it.

However, for Griffon-sama, surely it's just a trivial matter, huh...

"It, it's nice to meet you... Griffon-sama..."

“Yeah. I’ll entrust this man to you. He’s an idiot after all. Moreover, he’s an indecisive and troublesome fellow that’s forever troubled about things. However, unexpectedly, if you just give him a little push, he’ll immediately break into action. Manage him wisely.”^[TLN2]

I somewhat feel like I just got talked down... What’s painful is they’re the truth.

“Griffon-sama!!”

Ron and the others gather around Griffon-sama.

It’s been a long time since everyone saw him, so everyone’s delighted to have him.

“Oi, you brats. You lot are the direct subordinates of the flock’s boss. Therefore, your share of the earnings of the flock has gotten bigger. You owe me for bringing you up so give me some liquor and offerings.”

I was the one who brought them up though.

At the end, Griffon-sama turns to face me.

“You’ve publicly become the flock’s boss. Increase the amount of liquor and offerings you bring. Also, don’t be so stingy as to bring some once every new year. It should be once a month. Well, I’m not forcing you to, anyway.”

There’s no way I could disobey you, you know.

In your case, your wish is our command, right?

“Umm, did you come here this time for that?”

“N? Well, That’s a third of my reasons. Another third is I came to fulfill my responsibility for pushing Almis. The other third is...”

Griffon-sama puts his beak close to my ear.

“It’s more convenient for you this way, yes?”

The guests, showing expressions of surprise and fright, whisper to each other while looking at me and Griffon-sama frolicking.

The guests here are not only great clansmen, but also royalty from the other kingdoms and their envoys.

This would be enough for them to endorse the rumor that I am indeed the son of Griffon-sama. It has probably already spread around the Adernia Peninsula...

“Well then, I’ll be waiting for the liquor to arrive at the foot of that tree.”

Griffon-sama slowly walks towards the tree and lies down under it.

The guests back away from Griffon-sama as if evading him.

No, there’s a single person coming closer to him – the black haired woman from the Rozel Kingdom.

“Good day, Griffon-sama. It’s been a long time, yes?”

“N? Aa... it’s you... aa, 500 years ago, are you that young’un, Etzel’s wife?...”

“Yes. I’m happy to see you again.”

It’s a terribly interesting conversation, huh. That person and that creature.

“Say, Julia. Who is that woman? Do you know? They said some amazing things like 500 years ago, you know.”

“Yeah... That person, yes. She’s famous so I remember her. That person’s name is Merlin. She’s the Rozel Kingdom’s prime minister as well as chief sorcerer. As the world’s oldest sorcerer with an age exceeding 500 years, she’s considered the founder of sorcery. She’s also the former sex-slave of the Great King Etzel who made an unprecedented great empire with his beginnings as chief of the flat-faced tribes. She turned witch and killed him.^[TLN3]

Oh, really? What an amazing woman, huh...

No matter how you look at it, she doesn’t look like she’s any older than around her late teens... Well, since she’s a great sorcerer, it’s no trouble for her to live for more than 500 years, huh.

I really want to join the conversation but...

Once her greetings ended, Merlin immediately disappeared from Griffon-sama's place.

She then headed straight for me.

"I humbly apologize. It's about time I'll excuse myself."

Merlin leaves after an elegant greeting.



The coronation has ended, and everyone has gotten home.

The slaves are tidying up the trash generated by the banquet.

While looking at them, King Rosyth..... rather, King Emeritus Rosyth asks.

"Are you regretting this?"

".....I'm not. It's necessary after all."

If I had left things as is, then certainly a rebellion will occur – just like in Tetra's case. Victims of war will just increase.

...With this, I've become the same kind as King Ferrum, huh. That person did all the things just like me in order to rule the country, after all.

"I'll end the bloodshed in the Adernia peninsula in my generation."

"Don't carry too much weight on your shoulders. You have retainers and wives depending on you. Please don't forget that."

I know, father-in-law. I also have you, yes?

"It finally ended, huh. I guess my role here is done, huh..."

"What are you saying? I'll still have you living. As my successor... Father-in-law?"

Father-in-law turns frozen stiff and then falls with a thud.

"Someone!! The old king has collapsed!! Come help!!"

The sorcerers, led by Julia, immediately come rushing and carried the former king.

“Father!! Please don’t die!!”

Julia shouts while crying.

I wasn’t able to do anything...



“How are you still alive?”

“Asking that is a no-go. Did you want me to die?”

The former king playfully answers.

After that episode, thanks to earnest medical treatment, the King Emeritus’ life whas somewhat prolonged.

And here he is – living energetically.

Come to think of it, it seems like he’s more energetic than before.

“When I came to, I was in a flower garden. There was a river flowing where I saw my father. I was about to cross but my father told me ‘You still haven’t seen the face of your grandchildren, you know!!’ I was quite startled, yes.”

And because of that, you came back from Sanzu River, huh. [TLN4]

“Furthermore, my anxiety has been remove since the succession problem has been settled, see. I’ll be enjoying whatever short time I have left while looking forward to my grandchildren. Well, probably three years at most?”

In otherwords, you want me to give you grandchildren within three years? Haa...

Wait a minute. Doesn’t it mean that if I give you a grandchild, you’d die, right?

A, He might, however, come back saying he still haven’t seen his great-grandchildren.

“Jeez, father...”

“Haha, sorry, sorry.”

Julia looks quite happy.

Well, isn't this a good thing?



“Hey, Julia. What do you think about Regal DeBell's unnatural death?”

“What I think?... I believe it's called Inversion of Divine Protection.”

Inversion, huh...

I see, Divine Protection inverts, huh.

I have the same Divine Protection as Regal, in other words, if I played the wrong cards I might end up like that, huh.....

“You didn't manage to see anything with the ‘Divine Protection of Perception’?”

“Yeah... that was the first time. Right now it's visible, reliably. I don't know what happened but... it's probably because the conditions were bad, yes? That's why I wasn't able to see.”

“Conditions, huh”

The fairy's conditions, huh. I wonder what kind of conditions are they?

At the very least, we understand one of the conditions which is not being fun.

“So, what are the effects of inversion? It's operational requirements?”

“Uhm... The effect is your body will be burdened by the number of people who recognize you as king. The conditions, it would seem, are to lose a lot of your dependents, to admit defeat, and to appropriately lose as great king.

“That's not appropriate, no?... In other words, it's basically dependent upon the fairy, huh.”

How scary. It's possible that could happen to me too.

"Hey, Julia. Is it possible that we could've missed other effects?"

"...Let's see. That's a possibility. There are still a lot of bad conditions after all."

"I see... then..."

I pause my words and gaze at Julia.

"Is there such an effect where your thoughts could be overwritten and make you feel compelled to act as your dependents wished?"

"...I see one right now. Yes, it seems there's one. It appears that if I manage to apprehend such an effect, it's seal can be broken. If it's hidden anymore than this, then it feels pointlessly defiant..."

...There really is one.

From the beginning, I thought there was something strange that time after the war with King Ferrum and after my marriage ceremony with Tetra.

That time, if I recall correctly, I had thought there was no need for me to fight.

However, at the next moment, I was filled with a sense of duty that I needed to fight.

My headache that time was probably me being overwritten.

This is the biggest reason why I didn't ask for advice from Ron and the others regarding my marriage with Julia. Even though I wanted to, I never was able to. If I did, the Divine Protection would activate, and I would probably be forcibly induced into becoming king.

However, right now, to become king was supposed to be my own intention.

Without fail, certainly, probably...

"How scary..... to become someone not yourself....."

I snuggle up to Julia.

With this, I won't be able to sufficiently ask advice.

"Everything's going to be fine since I'm here. Tetra's also here. That girl probably already doesn't fit the framework of a dependent, right?"

"Yeah, she doesn't fit. Recently, I've come to understand how much loyalty someone has to me. Tetra has, rather than loyalty, feelings of love of the man-woman and husband-wife kind."

Recently, I feel my physical abilities improve everyday may because the people are slowly recognizing me as their leader.

Regrettably, the number of "dependents" whose physical abilities are improving by receiving the influence of my divine protection are not increasing.

Well, one of the necessary conditions for becoming a dependent is to have loyalty for the master to the extent that you'd die for him.

There's probably only a few people capable of possessing such serious loyalty.

Bolus, Bartolo, and Raymond all seem to hold some loyalty for me, so they contribute to the growth of my physical abilities.

However, they don't seem to have loyalty that would increase their own physical abilities.

Or perhaps I should say, most humans are like that.

However, I won't be able to ask them for advice, huh.

Considering the standpoint.

"Although I'm friends with Muzio... He's probably no good too. Let's see... It seems to me that I'd be relying a lot on Julia and Tetra from now on."

However, I need to polish my counter-measures.

My supporter's wishes are not always limited to good things.

Supporters are beings that eventually turn radical.

I might get pushed into a disadvantageous war due to the secondary effects of the Divine Protection of the Great King.

I need people and an organization that would stop myself from such effects.

Would Bartolo and Raymond be able to stop me?

“Well, let’s think this over slowly. We have a whole lot to reform.”

We’ll move the power in this country from the great clansmen to me, the king.

To further advance the centralization of power, and also to attempt a balance of power, legal and administrative reforms are imperative.

“However, before we do all that, there’s something we need to do first, right?”

“Yeah. First, we need to make a successor.”

I push Julia down.

“Be gentle, okay?”

“Yeah, Relax. I’m quite confident in myself.”

Translator’s Notes:

Note 1↑: It’s Royal Purple in English. Tyrian Purple historically speaking. I translated it literally for immersion.

Note 2↑: Griffon sama uses words you normally use for animals. In the manage him wisely part, he used a verb that’s normally used for horses, i.e., the verb literally means to manage (a horse).

Note 3↑: I don’t know why he used Merlin as a girl’s name. Probably got it from Fate Stay/Night.

Note 4↑: River of the Dead; Japanese/Buddhist equivalent to River Styx

CHAPTER 73

WITCH I

“It’s just as Merlin-dono suggested, huh. For this to go this well.”

King Rozel mutters inadvertently.

Merlin answers.

“It’s all thanks to these dragons. Thanks to them, I was able to immediately discern the state of affairs.”

She caresses the small dragon on her shoulder.

Using this small flying dragon with a speed of more than 500km/hr, confirming the situation in the field of battle can be done easily.

They had known yesterday that the De Morgal Kingdom’s army on its northern border had moved to reinforce its forces defeated by the Rosyth army.

Merlin, who immediately saw that, proposed to King Rozel to mobilize the troops.

Because of this, they managed to seize a huge chunk of territory.

“The De Morgal army that had invaded the Rosyth Kingdom has received huge damage with no hope of recovery. They have become exhausted and useless. Even just holding their present borders would probably be too much for them. They don’t have the strength to take back their northern nor their southern territories.”

That means that one of the three great kingdoms of the northern Adernia peninsula has technically crumbled.

“Then should we attack the De Morgal Kingdom in these circumstances?”

“No, we should wait. The commander of the southern invasion force is the First Crown Prince Carlo. However, he has failed. Most probably, his right of succession has already been divested. Internal discord concerning the succession is sure to follow. We’ll take

advantage of that.

However, the eye of discord is still not coming to a head. Let's just say despair turns towards courageous. Let's focus our efforts towards a 'rich country, strong army' while grabbing territory from the Fardam Kingdom.... Besides, the consolidation of Gallia is still not over, yes?"

The Rozel Kingdom only controls the southern part of Gallia. There are 32 tribes in Gallia, twenty of which have already been subjugated by the Rozel Kingdom. The remaining 11 tribes are defiant.

Fundamentally, they desire to conquer the Adernia Peninsula after they have subjugated Gallia.

"Is that so? As expected of Lady Merlin. My country keeps getting indebted to you."

"Fufu, I am the first retainer and foster parent to His Majesty, the First King. For me, this country is... kind of like my grandchild, you know?"

Merlin smiles inappropriately.

Although you could see nothing but a young girl around 17 to 18 years of age, it must be said that expression is certainly of a witch that has lived for several hundred years."

"Now then, Your Highness, it's about time I excuse myself. I still have experiments to do."

Merlin walks away with her mantle fluttering.

The officers and men send her off with gazes of awe and respect.



Merlin's house looks exceedingly small from the outside.

However, deep under it lies a gigantic basement.

There, strange medicine with complicated geometric patterns are drawn on them are found on shelves, their use, unknown.

Merlin sits down on the sofa.

“Nee, are you there, I wonder?”

—Yeah, I’m here—

A child-like voice answers Merlin.

Furthermore, this voice can only be heard by Merlin. Perhaps, it can even be said that if someone were to look at Merlin, she would look as if conversing with the devil.

“I’ve been thinking this a long time ago. I want to see you guys’ figures.”

—No way. It’s embarrassing. Just letting you hear our voices is already embarrassing enough, you know.—

The voice teasingly replies.

—By the way, is your research progressing?—

“Yes, it’s about 90% completed.”

—It’s the fruit of 500 years worth of effort after all, yes? It’s also thanks to the Divine Protection I gave you.—

“Yeah, this “Divine Protection of Perpetual Youth” yes?”

As she said such, Merlin cuts off her own finger with a knife and displays it.

While fresh blood did flow, it immediately stops, and a new finger springs forth from the cut.

“Rather than perpetual youth, constant prime regeneration of the body would be more correct, yes? The cell regenerates the instant it dies. However, if the body gets decapitated and the soul separates, then it would be game over. In other words, there’s no escape from instant death. It’s not immortality...”

Merlin mutters with a sigh.

It’s all fine that she managed to live a long life, but if she gets killed, it’s the end.

Furthermore, she had a hard time because of this divine protection.

Because she had lived for a long time, her fear of dying had worsened than that of a normal person.

It was probably a much less objectionable end for her if she had died much earlier.

—It couldn't be helped, right? Although we could make a hundred from one, we can't make one from nothing. We also can't turn a hundred into infinity.—

All living things are bound to the cycle of life and death.

These two things are inseparable.

A living thing will someday die.

Immortality is a contradictory existence on the same plane as a card with only a face.

Namely, it's an impossible, not to mention forbidden taboo.

“Well, my research is about immortality but... it's beyond sorcery. It will twist the fabric of this world and rewrite it. It's rebellion against the gods – the realisation of this magic.”

—I can't wait for it. Whether you'd succeed or not. I want to see it soon. This magic, I wonder how it'll be? Is it the dawn of a heavenly world where no one would die? Or rather... —

Is it the dawn of a hellish world where no one would die?

Or perhaps, the world itself might collapse into destruction.

“I don't want to die, just like that Etzel. I'll keep living even if I have to go down on my hands and knees to do so.”

Merlin smiles.

—Come to think of it, those guys are trying to hinder us again. This time, they seemed to have put a lot of effort. Be careful.—

“That’s the 10th time I’ve heard that. Those bunch are mostly no match for the King of Rozel I’m manipulating. Who can? Is it the Persis Emperor? That old man can’t even be bothered to come here.”

—It’s a transmigrator. However, the body is of this world. Only the soul is of another world. Was it intentional? Or was it an unexpected happenstance? Well, it doesn’t matter eitherway. The name is... —

—Almis, was it?—

“Oh, really?... Very interesting, yes?”

Merlin makes tea for herself and drinks it.

It’s green tea procured from the far east.

It’s unappetizing compared to the tea from Merlin’s hometown but she prefers it more than wine.

—What an uninteresting bunch, yes? To be scared of making something impossible possible. Even though the unknown is the most fun—

“Much like you commendable fairies who enjoy the thrill of the possibility of dying.”

—Is that so? Well, it’s not like other guys would be any better. Well then, I’ll be waiting in anticipation...”—

— Kurosaki Mari—

The voice disappears.

Merlin—Mari puts down her emptied cup on the table and stretches her body.

“Almis, huh... For the meantime, I guess I’ll see him with my own eyes.”

CHAPTER 74

WITCH II

He really was a baffling existence.

Mari is being reminded of Almis who he had just met quite a few hours ago.

If we assume that a lost person is a transmigrant, then is he considered one?

Well, it's not like it's impossible to usurp a person's body. If you mistakenly eat or if you were served Soul-separation Grass, the soul would be separated from your body. You'll die but the body will still be alive for awhile. Under these circumstances, if a different soul happened to come near, it might inhabit that dying body as if getting sucked in.

It's perhaps most likely by chance..... or by the fairies' mischief.

That being said, the systems of that guy's country are quite in order.

Its agriculture is extensive, and its salt mines produce much yield. Furthermore, it has paper...

They have completed laying down the framework to become a strong country. Although after that is how will he shut out the opposition great clansmen.

While it's still possible, a plan needs to...

"Nee, mother. Mother, can you hear me?"

"Yeah, sorry. I hear you, Elly."

Mari caresses the black creature she's riding on.

This black creature named Elly, a flying dragon, gives off a joyous cry.

Mari is in the sky right now.

Since flying dragons can fly as fast as a jet-plane, they arrived in the Rozel Kingdom-

proper in the blink of an eye.

Because high-level flying dragons can freely manipulate wind and fire, Mari can't feel the wind at all.

Even though people riding high-level flying dragons is unheard of because of the dragons' high pride, Elly is an exception.

Somehow, even after reaching adulthood, Elly couldn't be weaned. Well, for Mari, this way is more convenient.

"What is it?"

"It's nothing. It's just that you've been quiet."

Elly asks worriedly.

By the way, Elly cannot speak human language. Vocal organs of dragons are different from that of humans.

However, it's easy for them to manipulate the wind and atmosphere to make sounds via vibration.

"Sorry. Don't mind me. It's not a big deal really."

Mari caresses Elly's head while showing a smile.



"Your Highness. I am here to request permission for the War Tactics No. 1 Sorcery Ritual." [TLN1]

Mari immediately declares after returning to the Imperial Palace.

"For the Rosyth Kingdom? They don't look that much of a threat to me..."

King Rozel shows his disapproval.

For a single country, Plan No.2 that would bring about famine would suffice.

For Plan No.1, more than half of the southern part of the Southern Adernia Peninsula would be subjected to famine.

Using that on a single country such as the Rosyth Kingdom would be overkill and would cost too much.

In the first place, they had just used it on three countries on the north. It's not like they had that much materials in stock for large scale sorcery.

"I disagree, that country is a threat. They are proactively appointing Cretians in their ranks which infers they are aiming to modernize. Even more than that, they have succeeded in centralizing power in their recent civil war. Furthermore, their new king is young. There's no mistaking they'll soon be able to challenge us militarily. When that time comes, they'll be a troublesome obstacle that will hinder our beloved country. We should immediately weed out the sprouts before they grow."

While Plan No. 1 will cost a lot, it's not to the extent of a campaign.

You can think of it as... a cheap way to cause ruin to a single country.

"However, No.2 would be fine, yes? That country is not big, yes?"

"No, no. The ones we'll be cursing are the surrounding countries of the Rosyth Kingdom."

Mari laughs with a grin.



Katsu, katsu, katsu (*Step step step*)

Mari's shoes make a loud noise every time she takes a step on the stairs.

Screams of pain and agony, angry shouts and voices can be heard here and there.

The further she went down, the more the intense stink assailed Mari.

The suburbs of the Rozel Kingdom's Capital city of Lydia.

Inside the prison where heinous criminals are jailed, nicknamed the 'Poison Vessel.'

Mari came to this prison taking along with her 10 brawny soldiers.

She has one objective – to gather materials for the incantation.

“Hmm... No. 6, 8, 12, 15, 23, 31. Carefully take them out one by one. They’re quite dangerous so be careful.”

“Understood.”

The soldiers first go for No. 6’s cell. It’s an incredibly wide cell where you’d still have room even if you imprisoned thirty people there.

The cell is soiled dirty with several human bones and decaying dead bodies lying around.

It’s really horrible.

Inside is a man with bloodshot eyes, sitting alone.

He jumps up as he sees Mari’s figure, bites the rails of his cell, and begins shouting.

“You witch!! Go to hell!! I’ll kill you!!!”

“Ahaha, you’re energetic as usual, huh. Yes, that’s a good thing. It’s most desirable that the sacrifice is energetic.”

Mari pulls out a plant from her pocket.

It’s a plant with a lavender colored flower.

However, you can immediately see from the shape that it’s not a lavender flower.

“Devil Grass. It’s about to wear out so it’s taking quite a toll on you, yes?”

Mari raises the strong drug and shows it before the man’s eyes.

“Shut up!! I won’t yield to the likes of you!!” says the man while his eyes remained fixed at the devil grass.

Narcotic drugs can be roughly classified into two – depressants and stimulants.

Devil grass belongs to the stimulant classification.

This grass vigorously excites a person's spirit. It's able to amplify feelings of anger and hatred.

Sorcery's driving force is emotion. The more emotion is in abundance, the more it will facilitate sorcery.

For putting up barriers, the emotions that matter are love, kindness, and the thought of wanting to protect people.

For putting up a curse, it would be negative emotions like envy and jealousy.

Kodoku sorcery is a typical example. [TLN2]

Poisonous insects would go and kill each other, collecting malice. That would then be used as the medium for the sorcery.

The insects would be easy to handle and procure after all.

Ultimately, using other media than insects such as dogs and monkeys, even humans, would not be a problem. No, rather, it is more desirable that a living being with higher intelligence be used. That way, emotions would be richer.

Human Kodoku.

All sorcerers have heard of this technique at least once.

However, there are several problematic points in Human Kodoku sorcery.

First, there are some resistance in pitting fellows of the same race.

To begin with, it would cost a lot.

By the time they'd be willing to eat each other, they would have mostly gone mad. Their anger and hatred would have already warped that you wouldn't get the anticipated result.

Furthermore, there are no sorcerers thinking of do such madness.

Curses, like chickens, come home to roost. / Harm set, harm get.

An overwhelmingly strong sorcery will destroy the body. A lot of sorcerers don't involve themselves with such sorcery for fear of rebound.

However, Mari showed it could be done – in a manner more efficient by using narcotics and a thoroughness that amplifies hatred and anger.

In a way, that woman is also broken.

She has already lost all ethical sense of a modern Japanese more than five hundred years ago.

Her reason of corruption is... 'Woman' 'Divine Protection of Perpetual Youth' 'Uncivilized Equestrian Tribe' and 'Sex Slave'.

It's easily inferred from these four keywords (phrases).

"Fufu, Splendid, it's splendid that you're energetic. Before you get killed, I'll make sure you inhale plenty of this. Hold out for three days for me, okay? Though it might be so tough that you'd want to die, hold out for me, okay?"

Mari smiles boldly.



"Umm–, what's our objective for today? You want to reduce the national power of the Rosyth Kingdom, yes? Then, should we apply a curse on them? Regarding that, the number of sacrifices is too little. With this much, we'd be repelled by a pit barrier and we won't be able to do much damage, you know?"

Annabella, a sorcerer, asks Mari.

Although she's just a youth around 15 years old, she receives guidance directly from Mari.

She's being groomed as a future assistant.

“It’s fine. We don’t need to do damage. Our goal is to make the people think that the Rosyth Kingdom is the one responsible for cursing the surrounding countries. There’s conveniently an excellent sorcerer there after all.

Annabella shuts her mouth after understanding Mari’s intention.

She has already understood their designations in the goal. All that’s left is to devote themselves in the sorcery.

“■■■■■ ! ! ! ”

Annabella’s gaze turns towards the shouting sacrifices.

They are all gagged and crucified.

It’s safe to say that only curses would be coming out of those mouths if the gags fell off.

They were quite noisy, so they were silenced.

“ .. ”

“Ahahaha, is your conscience hurting?”

“Well... somewhat. However, they’re just reaping what they sowed.”

Annabella declares while looking at the crucified convicts.

“Those three men have raped and killed virgins and young boys.

Those guys have robbed, killed, and set in fire the house and bodies of a family of eight. They caused the deaths of a total of six more people in the resulting blaze that victimized six more houses.

Those guys are traitors that have secretly colluded with other countries.

Those guys conducted outlawed slave hunting, kidnapped more than a hundred people, and sold them to Cretians.”

“Fufu, that pretty much hits the mark, yes? Thanks to these men, we were able to

gather several raw materials one after another.”

In addition to getting raw materials, they’ve also improved public order.

It’s hitting two birds with one stone.

“These were guys destined to die anyway. Well, it’s just a natural punishment.”

“Well, it couldn’t be helped even if we keep them alive. Although there’s still the alternative of hard labor or getting ransomed or sold off as prisoners.”

Mari orders to have the gags on the condemned criminals removed.

Since they don’t have any more energy to say curses, they were given reprieve and made to breathe easier just so they could live longer.

“As expected, crucifixion is the best for sacrifices, yes? A lot of them faint if they were burned at the stake. This way, even if they faint you could just whip them awake.”

“Fear would overpower anger if they were burned after all, although it’s tougher that way.”

“You know well. Are you speaking from experience?”

Mari smiles at Annabelle’s joke..... however, you can see from her eyes’ that she’s not laughing inside.

“Well, you can say that.”

Mari turns her back on Annabelle and the convicts and starts walking away from that place. She then says:

“Well then, I’m going to sleep. Tell me when they die. I’ll be doing the finishing touches, see. You guys bore a lot of responsibility after all – in this curse of this level.”

After leaving that place, Mari murmurs in a place where no one can hear:

“A death you know will clearly come is a much less objectionable fate. What a fortunate bunch.”

[INTERMISSION 2: CRUMBLING BALANCE]

CHAPTER 75

EXPECTATIONS OF EACH NATIONS

De Morgal Kingdom

The revocation of Carlo De Morgal's status as crown prince of the kingdom has been decided.

Accompanying this is the degradation of the Carlo faction headed by Tonino.

Next is the main reason that the war had been lost – the Blouse clan.

Blouse, as the head of the clan, has been condemned to execution.

The first son has been decided to succeed him.

What to do with Rune Blouse, who had opened the gates to Blouse town without a fight, and Prince Carlo is still undecided.

The kingdom had lost too much power in this war.

They had lost territory to both the Rozel Kingdom and the Rosyth Kingdom. Furthermore, their population of more than 450,000 people had fallen to 350,000.

The only saving grace was that the territory they had lost had been limited to the border clans' territories.

The De Morgal clan itself did not take much losses.

But then, they have begun rapidly declining because of the forces unleashed by not being able to protect their territory.

In that De Morgal Kingdom, a huge flashpoint is being born – that of the succession problem.

By all rights, Carlo succeeding the throne as crown prince had already been settled peacefully. However, Carlo losing his social standing has again rekindled the problem.

In the fray are Second Prince, Pax De Morgal and Third Prince, Aldo De Morgal.

Because both are supported by big great clansmen, dispute is inevitable.

Fardam Kingdom

“Wahahaha, there goes DeMorgal!! Cheers!!”

“You musn’t be complacent, my king. With this, the Rozel Kingdom’s power has grown stronger.”

A close associate advices King Fardam who’s drinking liquor.

“Haha, how stiff of you. Listen here, there’s always a plus in everything. Besides, there’s one good thing we got from this, right? It’s the Gillbed Kingdom.”

“...Certainly, the conquests by the Rozel Kingdom made them directly border the Gillbed Kingdom but...”

This means that the Rozel Kingdom would now have fronts not only at two kingdoms – Fardam and DeMorgal, but also at a third one, the Gillbed Kingdom.

Because they would have provided deterrence against such an expanded front, the Rozel Kingdom would now have a more difficult time conducting military movements.

“Besides, the Gillbed Kingdom’s plans to push south would come to a halt, right? Well, Because of Zoldias’ interference, it was bound to fail anyway. Fufu, that would happen if you steal a march.”

“However, we basically have no means to stop the Rozel Kingdom from invading, right?”

King Fardam boldly sneers at his aide’s inquiry.

“Fufu...”

“Do, don’t tell me...”

“Cheers!!”

“It’s just as I thought, huh...”

From the very beginning, the Fardam Kingdom is being denied the south by the Gillbed Kingdom. Therefore, territorial expansion is impossible.

They had to make do with what they had now.

They will turn their focus to domestic affairs. They will train their soldiers, strengthen cooperation between the great clans, and construct forts.

This is the only optimal measure that the Fardam Kingdom could take at present.

As such, the strategy appeared to have been the correct one and, for the time being, they continue to hold back the Rozel Kingdom...

Gillbed Kingdom

“Damn that Zoldias...”

King Gillbed punches a chair in frustration.

The Gillbed Kingdom’s push southward had been going considerably well. They had been attacking the groups of small countries popularly called the unconsolidated territories.

The largest they could go was a population of about 10,000. Such countries that average only in the several thousands folded against the Gillbed Kingdom without any resistance.

However, the Zoldias Kingdom intervened. They entered into an alliance with the various countries of the Unconsolidated Territories.

As a result, the Gillbed Kingdom ended up having to hurriedly fortify their borders.

“Like hell we’d stop here and take this. Let’s mobilize more soldiers. Before the Rozel Kingdom fully mobilizes and invades, we must raise our national power.”

King Gillbed's ambition continues.

Zoldias Kingdom

This country is one of the seven countries holding a 500 year history since their founding.

Their territory is vast but dotted with mountains, so their population is not that large.

"Listen here, no matter what happens, we will defend against the Gillbed kingdom's push south. If the Unconsolidated Territories were to be annexed by that country, our country is sure to follow. While our country is naturally defensible, once they have laid the groundwork, our fall is set in stone."

King Zoldias assertively supported the Unconsolidated Territories and protected them from the Gillbed Kingdom.

Naturally, there's no way that arrangement was "just" supporting.

They are buying grain from the Unconsolidated Territories at a low cost.

Because the Zoldias Kingdom cannot harvest much grains, this was an exceedingly helpful arrangement.

"My King. An envoy from the Carnus Kingdom has arrived."^[TLN1]

"N? What could this possibly be about?"

Carnus Kingdom

This country is not one of the so-called Seven Kingdoms.

It's an emerging country from two hundred years ago that became large from humble beginnings.

They have lots of Povenian and Cretian immigrants as such their technological

strength is very high for an Adernian country.

The Carnus Kingdom's current objective is to unify the Unconsolidated Territories.

Therefore, both the Gillbed Kingdom who's invading directly by force and the Zoldias Kingdom with their alliance are an exceedingly unpleasant eyesore.

"We have conveyed to Zoldias that they should not lay their hands on the south. With this, Zoldias' influence won't extend to the Consolidated Southern Territories. Well, that depends on whether he obliges."

King Carne is drinking Adernian wine from a Persis-made cup while eating Povenian strawberries while sitting on a Cretian-made chair.

"So, is the plan advancing?"

"Yes. Three countries have agreed to an alliance with us."

"Good. Now then, let's send my daughters to those three countries. Recently, there are around three to four that have turned fourteen, yes?"

Because King Carnus has several concubines and mistresses, he doesn't have a good grasp of the number of children he sired.

"Understood. We will begin the marriage preparations immediately."

"I'll be relying on you."

King Carnus is still unaware. Under his kingdom, a troublesome being is about to wake up.

Eville Kingdom

The Eville Kingdom is a country located between the Zoldias Kingdom and the Rosyth Kingdom.

It's one of the so-called Seven Kingdoms.

“Hey, what do you think?”

“Huh... about what?”

King Eville frowns in discomfort.

“About the new King Rosyth.”

“Ah, he’s... let’s see, a fearless young lad.”

“Are you an idiot? I don’t mean that. I’m talking about whether that youngster would pose a danger to our country.”

King Eville says in displeasure.

He’s basically always in a bad mood so his aides are not particularly nervous.

“If His Majesty is that worried, then how about entering a matrimonial relationship with them.”

“Marriage...”

King Eville thinks for a little while and then shakes his head.

“Let’s pass on that. We’ll be rejected. And when that happens, my honor will be sullied.”

“Is that so?”

“Isn’t that obvious? It’s not like that man has Royal Rosythian blood in him. Let’s see what happens even if our country’s daughter is accepted under these circumstances. There’s a possibility our country might intervene; distrust may come from the great clans and the royal house; and relations may worsen with his current wives... well, it’s completely all pain, no gain. There won’t be any benefit for them if they entered a matrimonial relationship with our country.

The Rosyth Kingdom is comparatively wealthy.

The Eville Kingdom, although not to the extent of the Zoldias Kingdom, is dotted with mountens and have little plains. In other words, they can’t harvest that much grains.

“Well, I guess it would be fine if we amicably contacted them. First, we must ascertain things through that youngster’s personality. Will he be expansionist or domestically-oriented...”

Belvedere Kingdom

“This is really a problem.”

“The Rosyth Kingdom?”

King Belvedere nods at his aide’s words.

“Yeah. The Rosyth Kingdom has finally succeeded in centralizing their power. In other words, that country has become one united monolith. Moreover, they are proactively trading with Cretia with their industry called paper. This is truly a problem...”

A neighboring country is turning into a powerful country.

This is a worrying matter that must be stopped.

There’s no mistaking that the Rosyth Kingdom would be expanding its territory. Based on that incident with the DeMorgal Kingdom, the possibility of them challenging other militarily is very high.

The first one to get attacked would probably be the Belvedere Kingdom. They have vast plains and therefore could harvest lots of grains.

They’re a considerably rich and profitable country.

“One way or another, we won’t be able to weaken them, huh...”

“I have one suggestion, if you may permit...”

King Belvedere lends his ears to his aide.

“What is it?”

“That is...”

Lezzad

Lezzad is one of the colonies of Claris, a Cretian city-state.

However, it's not like its being directly ruled from Claris.

It's a close relationship of being a vassal state.

They are able to exercise autonomy because of influential merchants.

Today's agenda is about the birth of a new king in the Rosyth Kingdom.

"Ains-san. We want you to also introduces us to King Rosyth. Everyone should have the right to trade. Naturally, we understand that you would have the preferential right to this..."

"That's so, isn't it. Of course, I would feel bad to monopolize him. Besides, I can only prepare so much goods. As such, I have a suggestion..."

Ains grins and declares:

"We should secure an alliance with the Rosyth Kingdom."

"An alliance... is it?..."

Up until now, the Cretian City-states, including Lezzad, never had an alliance with peoples of a different race.

It's because they are sufficiently strong and consider themselves a superior race with no need of borrowing another race's power.

"Naturally, I understand everyone's dislike of allying with savages. However, we have recently seen huge movements from the Persis Empire. If our country descends into hostilities with the Persis Empire, then naturally they won't have leeway to support us. In that time, what would happen if Povenia or another Adernian country attacks us? It's a dangerous prospect, yes? I think it is necessary that we secure for ourselves a supporter."

Ains' proposition is reasonable.

However, Cretians, from the very beginning, have unpleasant feelings on monarchies.

They are a race that espouses Republicanism and are absolutely allergic to monarchs and dictators.

Furthermore, nothing could change the fact that the Rosyth Kingdom is of a different race.

"Actually, a wife of the Rosythian king is a half-Cretian."

Ains pulls out a card.

The parliament breaks into commotion.

"So... what do we do about that?-We should support the succession of the child of the Half-Cretian Tetra-sama. We will then have that prince marry one of Claris' influential men's daughter."

The parliament focuses their gazes on Ains.

"Furthermore, they seem to want talented people able to speak Cretian. Fufu, let us fulfill that request. As a merchant. If we do that for several years..."

Ains smiles with a grin.

"The Rosyth Kingdom will become a Cretian Kingdom."

"What a superb response."

Ains enters his house and pushes his coat to a slave. While he wasn't able to secure approval, he managed to get more favorable response than he had imagined.

All of members of the parliament of the Claris colony of Lezzad are misers. If they divided the profit, then they would immediately agree.

He then sits down and takes out a paper. It's about the investigation reports regarding

Helen, Tetra's mother.

In the Adernia Peninsula, there's a Cretian Colony called Gehenna. It's a colony of the Alto City-state.

The person controlling that colony is a noted noble born in Alto, a tyrant by the name Abraham.

Gehenna obtained complete independence from Alto's control and began practically changing into Abraham's Kingdom.

Amongst that Abraham's daughters is a woman called Helen.

She had run away from home around twenty years ago in opposition to his father's tyranny and had become missing since then.

If you investigated, it would seem that she had met Radou twenty years ago.

If that Tetra were the grandchild of Abraham, then making Tetra's child the crown prince would be simple.

However...

"Haa... the problem is that she's a Gehennan."

Ains, in the first place, is an Alto citizen, who's currently an MP of the Claris-Lezzad Parliament.

If her blood relationship with Abraham were to be known by everyone, the Rosyth Kingdom's relationship with Gehenna would naturally grow stronger.

In that case, there would be no point to this.

"For the meantime, let's put this for safekeeping."

Ains put it in a seemingly important drawer.

"Oooi, Ains! I'm back."

The gate opens.

It's Ains' brother Nikolaos.^[TLN2]

"Aa, brother. Welcome home."

"Na, Ains.... Do you have an opening in your company?"

That's the first thing he says.

Having just moved to Lezzad, Nikolaos had sold all of his slaves and land so he has quite a fortune.

However, as one would expect, he had become worried at being jobless.

"Let's see... Older brother doesn't have aptitude for commerce so..."

Ains thinks for a little.

"Then, how about you go to King Rosyth? Older brother's vast knowledge might be of great help to them, you know."

CHAPTER 76

CHARACTER INTRODUCTIONS + GLOSSARY OF TERMS + GEOGRAPHY

Almis Ars Rosyth (18 years old)

His surname increased from marrying Tetra and Julia. Protagonist. Worried about the Divine Protection of the Great King Recently.

Height is 165cm (5ft5in) – quite tall for Adernians. Hair color is Gray.

Divine Protections

Divine Protection of the Great King.

Raises the holder's physical abilities by the number of people recognizing holder as leader. (There are limits however)

Raises the physical and sorcerous power of people who had swore their complete allegiance to the holder.

Receives thought induction from dependents.

Load during inversion would depend on the number of humans considering holder as leader.

Wives

Tetra Ars (17 years old)

Heroine. Self-styled as the World's Oldest Magician. Although Tetra was the one who named the phenomenon as magic, and it's not like she's mistaken but, she wasn't particularly the first to manipulate flame and wind.

Height is 140cm (4ft7in) – shorter than the average Adernian woman. Hair color is blue. Breasts are light cruisers. ^[TLN1]

Julia (18 years old)

Heroine. Daughter of King Rosyth. I had finalized her character ahead of Tetra (Around Volume 1) but... I wonder how things turned out like this. She had recently regained her status as heroine. Her breasts and butt are quite big.

Height is 146cm (4ft9½in) – a little taller than the average Adernian ((female)). Hair color is lavender. Breasts are heavy cruisers.

Divine Protections

Divine Protection of Perception

Enables holder to somewhat determine another's divine protection. Since it doesn't give a way the name, it's necessary for Julia to name it.

Divine Protection of Clairvoyance/Thousand-Li Eye.

Enables holder to see very very far. In other words, it turns the eyes into telescopes. However, if there is an obstacle on the line of sight, then naturally, the holder won't be able to see. Therefore, this Divine Protection won't help with seeing Almis' figure deep within the forest...

Subordinates

Ron (17 years old)

A fan of Almis. Can hold his own in swordfighting. Although he shows leadership qualities, he has his foolish moments and the occasional strange actions. He was recently granted territory. He seems to have been engaged to Soyon.

Height is 160cm (5ft3in) – average for Adernians. Hair color is black.

Roswald (17 years old)

Spear user. He's currently the strongest amongst Almis' subordinates. Although he's normally foolish, there are times he shows intelligence. He seems to have been engaged to Lia.

Height is 167cm (5ft5¾in). A bit rude guy for being taller than the protagonist. Hair

color is light brown.

Gram (17 years old)

His name doesn't have anything to do with g (gram) – it was just by coincidence. Bow-user. He can perform horse archery. He has a level and calm personality. He's under the thumb of Lulu.

Height is 175cm (5ft9in). Ridiculously huge (to Adernians). Hair color is black.

Soyon (17 years old)

She's a very good girl. Although she's very smart, she occasionally has her Ron-like stupid moments. Likes animals. Specializes in Soul-riding. She's engaged to Ron.

Height is 145 cm (4ft9in) – average Adernian. Hair color is light brown.

Breasts are light cruisers.

Lulu (15 years old)

She has a little difficult personality. It's unknown where she got that but she's quite strong in sorcery. She seems to be engaged to Gram.

Height is 138cm (4ft6in). She's secretly competing with Tetra. Hair color is gray.

Breasts are light cruisers.

Lia (15 years old)

A Germanis slave. Female. She was brought out to teach everyone equestrian skills but she's now retired. And because she was recently released from slavery, and because her only identity has been lost, her presence is slowly dwindling. She recently began learning Adernian. She's finally engaged to Roswald. By the way, she's being called "nee-san (older sister)" by Virgar and the Germanis. She seems to dislike this.

Height is 160cm (5ft3in) – about Average for a Germanis woman. Haircolor is brown with a tinge of red. Breasts are light cruisers.

Yal (In his mid 20s)

He had recently become a fan of Almis. Would probably look good with glasses. He's currently doing his best studying Cretian and arithmetic.

Height is 150cm (5ft3in) – average. Hair color is black.

Bolus (40s)

An indispensable character in destroying King Ferrum from within his kingdom. While he basically can do anything, he doesn't have any specialties. He's a jack of all trades. He's easily moved to tears. While he considers Almis as his lord, his loyalty remains with Tetra.

Height is 163cm (5ft4in) – taller than average. Hair color is black.

Ordovices

I took his name from the eponymous geological era. I thought about it for 3 seconds. He's what you might call Clansman A. The author saw no need to differentiate him with the to-be mentioned Perm because there was no need. If another one gets named from a geological era, then there won't be any problems even if you consider him as Clansman C.

Perm

Clansman B. Same as above.

Bartolo (Early 30's)

Old drunkard.

Height is 159cm (5ft2½in). There was a time he drunk himself in vexation because he was just a centimeter short.

Raymond (Late 30's)

King Rosyth's younger brother. Reasonably skilled.

He's aiming for a royalty-led nation building and is helping Almis.

Ismere (23 years old)

Self-proclaimed genius architect. Female. She went to the Adernia peninsula looking for a job. She's still stunned at Almis' succession.

Qingming (22 years old)

Aspiring novelist. Traveler. He has completed his parent's wish of reaching the farthest ocean. He's currently writing while being attached to Ismere. He's also stunned at Almis' succession.

By the way, his progress in writing the "Chronicles of traversing the Great Continent" is going favorably.

Joseph (Late 20's)

Ron's subordinate. Very skilled swordsman. Centurion.

Dora (Early 20's)

Officially employed as Sorcerer. She's worried that she needs to get married soon.

Amerigo (30's)

He's having a hard time in desk work. However, in order to feed his family, he's grappling with documents day after day.

Friendlys

King Rosyth (Late 30s)

Dying tanuki/raccoon. Even though his hair roots are also dying, it would seem the person himself would die faster. He has decided to die once he manages to see his grandchild. While his illness is currently unknown, it's probably terminal cancer.

Height is 162cm (5ft3¾in). Hair color is gray.

Muzio (19 years old)

Second son of the Equus tribe. He's the most skillful bowman in the Equus tribe. He's the protagonist's "only" friend. He's being isolated from the king after all...

By the way, he's engaged to a woman with huge breasts.

Has the "Divine Protection of the Wind Spirit?"

He seems to be able to manipulate the wind.

Hostiles

King Ferrum (Deceased) (Late 30's)

His name is Robert. He died a relatively happy death for a villain.

Regal DeBell (Deceased) (Early 20's)

He suddenly emitted blood and died in the Fairy Incident. As such, he is deceased.

Bermet (Deceased) (82 years old)

He fell into Yal's scheme and died. Well, it's reasonable if you considered his life span. His family never got suspected of rebellion so one might say that it was good that he died.

Gilberto (Deceased) (Early 20's)

He died by Roswald's intentional "Sorry, my hand slipped!"

Merlin (Kurosaki Mari)

Witch. She's perfectly comfortable doing inhumane acts. She's completely mind broken. She was 17 when she transmigrated. Even now, she looks like 17. Her looks are on the cute side. It seems Flat-faced clansman A (Deceased) had said of her "crying face is the best."

Divine Protection of Perpetual Youth

Holder never ages because the holder's body cells regenerate faster than normal.

Barring instant death, any part of the holder's body regenerates. The holder will die if the holder's body sustains damage faster than it could regenerate.

Effects are beyond the control of the holder.

Neutral Factions (Characters whose stances are still unknown)

Ains (Early 30's)

Cretian Merchant. Has a hard to please older brother. Loves making money. Recently, he's been maneuvering behind the scenes to secretly position Tetra's child as crown prince. Because of this conspiracy, he's demoted to the Neutral Faction.

Height is 155cm (5ft1in). Unfortunately, money can't buy prudence. Hair color is black.

Alexios (23 years old)

He gives off a handsome guy vibe just from his name. He's a real one, if I may add. Furthermore, he's an eyepatch wearing jakigan. ^[TLN2]

He's currently making a world with Melia just for the two of them. They have recently moved to the Adernia Peninsula and are currently enjoying their newly-married life.

Melia (22 years old)

She's a woman that loves animals. She's crazy in love with Alexios. She's currently making a world with Alexios just for the two of them. She's currently enjoying their newly-married life.

Nikolaos^[TLN3] (38 years old)

He espouses the heliocentric theory. He's an open-minded person..... but contrary to expectations, he has quite a stubborn head; believing that he could not make even a single mistake.

Ayesha^[TLN4] (22 years old)

Although she has the same name as a certain someone somewhere, it doesn't mean that the author considers thinking of names as a troublesome affair.

She's currently the strongest human in the world. She has built a good relationship with Xerxes. She's the passive one in bed.

Divine Protections

Divine Protection of the Hunter

The holder's physical durability increases while hunting. By the way, hunting means in hunting in a broader sense meaning hunting humans fall within the Divine Protections' scope.

Divine Protection of the God of War

The holder will become very strong when fighting.

Divine Protection of Berserk

The holder becomes intoxicated from blood which increases holder's tension/spirit. Holder's physical abilities will explosively rise. However, holder's ability to think will fall.

Xerxes III (47 years old)

He's being considered by the world as an invader and a greedy emperor but he's not any of that at all. Rather, he wants to push his throne to another. However, no other person beside Xerxes has the faculty to be able to rule ((such an empire)).

His nether regions are quite energetic. He has lots of wives. By the way, Ayesha is not his wife but she's his lover.

Carlo DeMorgal

Crown Prince of the DeMorgal Kingdom. His punishment for losing the war is under deliberation.

Rune Blouse

Second son of the Blouse clan. Bloodlessly capitulated his town to the enemy. His punishment is under deliberation.

Non-humans

Griffon

He's the great Griffon-sama said to have lived more than 3,000 years. He's holed up in the forest. He seems to have been throwing his weight around when he was young.

Terminology

Sorcery

Generally, refers to strange phenomena. Encompasses an extremely large scope.

Sorcery

In sorcery, this term specifically refers to the art of barriers and curses.

Magic ((Techniques))

In sorcery, this term specifically refers to reproducing natural phenomena.

Magic

To break the rules of the world. (Something that must not be done.)

Divine Protection

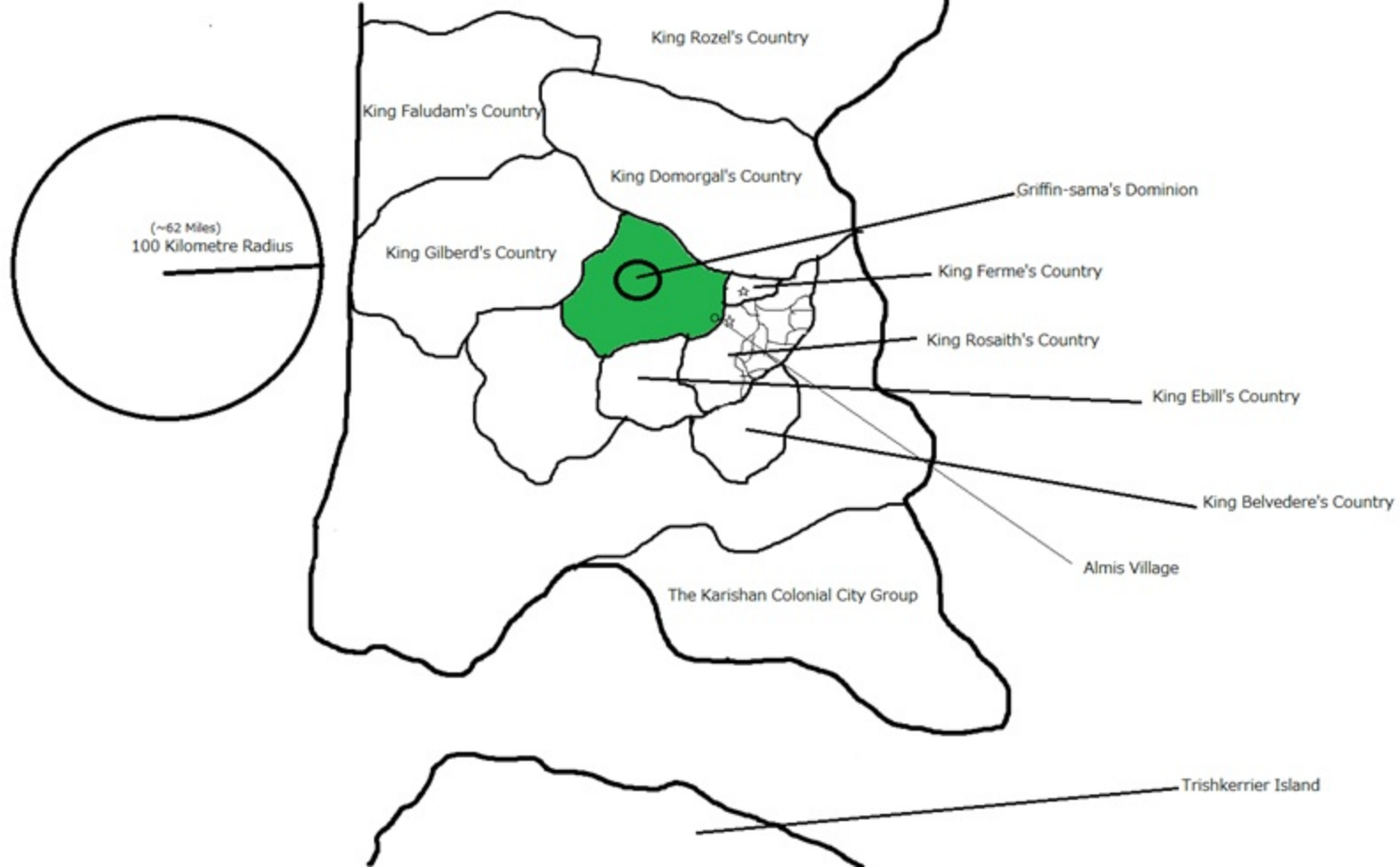
Strange Phenomena that's not sorcery. A holder is very rare. Even if there is one, there's a high chance that they're useless. (For example, a blind person receiving a Divine Protection of Clairvoyance)

The Lost

Otherworlders. All will have divine protections. The protagonist is also one. The cause, it would seem, is what the Griffon calls “those young’uns.”

Fairies

Referst to “those young’uns.” They’re a species that’s very fun and never forgets humor. They’re divided into three factions – the Neutral, the Conservation, and the Reform factions.



Rosyth Kingdom

Their power has rapidly expanded these recent years. It's the strongest country in the southern part of the South Adernia. Population is around 250,000. Present King id Almis Ars Rosyth.

Eville Kingdom

A country on the west of the Rosyth Kingdom. Agricultral output is low. Population is around 10,000.

Belvedere Kingdom

A country on the south of the Rosyth Kingdom. Population is around 10,000.

Zoldias Kingdom

A country fiercely resisting the Gillbed Kingdom's southern invasion. Population is around 140,000.

Carnus Kingdom

A country ruled by a Povenian king. Population is 150,000. They are steadily gaining territory.

Alva Peoples

Equus Tribe

They are currently in an alliance with the Rosyth Kingdom. Population is 30,000. They mobilize even women and children during wartime. All of them are natural-born cavalrymen.

Lord Equus

He hates agriculture and agricultural people. However, he understands the importance of socializing and thus acts accordingly. He's worrying about the succession problem.

Methyl

Next Chief of the Equus Tribe. He has only appeared in name.

Muzzio

Refer to above.

Ledus

Third son of the Equus Tribe

Lupus Tribe

Population is around 30,000. More uncivilized than the Equus tribe.

Aries Tribe

Population is around 10,000. They are subject to the Lupus Tribe.

Three Countries by Cretia

Lezzad

Colony of the Claris city-state. This is Ains' base of operations.

Gehenna

Colony of the Alto city-state. It's being controlled by a tyrant.

Nemes

Colony of the Therbae city-state.

DeMorgal Kingdom

It is... was the biggest country in the northern part of the southern Adernia peninsula.

Population has fallen from around 400,000 to around 300,000. The succession problem has erupted in their country and has become a serious matter.

Gillbed Kingdom

Their population has grown from 370,000 to 400,000 through southern conquests. They're worrying about the Zoldias Kingdom.

Fardam Kingdom

It's has continued to withstand the Rozel Kingdom's invasion. It's king is a party animal.

Rozel Kingdom

It's a huge country that controls territory stretching from Southern Gallia to Northern Adernia. Total population is around 3,000,000.

CHAPTER 77

HOTSPRINGS

“Fuu...”

Once you submerge in hot water, you will feel a warming sensation from your core.

The hot water’s color is cloudy.

It’s been said that you can expect beautifying effects on the skin from this.

If you can complain about one thing then that would be the bad smell similar to rotting egg.

However, it’s a sulphuric spring so it couldn’t be helped.

“Iyaa, I had wanted to come to a spring once.”

“We were busy after all.”

Julia says while twining herself around my right arm.

I feel a bountifully soft sensation.

The concept of hot springs itself is known.

Naturally, if sulphur, an ingredient for making gunpowder, exists then surely hot springs also exist.

As expected, if you start looking you’ll immediately find one.

However, unfortunately, the Adernians doesn’t seem to have a custom of bathing in hot springs. Or, if I were to say more accurately, they don’t have the custom of expressly travelling to a hot spring to bathe there.

Locals, on the other hand, seem to frequent them.

Well, there is little idle curiosity for Adernians, whose basic means of movement are

walking on foot, to go to hot springs several kilometers away just to bathe there.

And because there are few people who would purposely dig up a hot spring since agriculture is a busy lifestyle, there's not a great number to go to.

"There are even more types of hot springs other than sulphuric springs, if you looked around. There might even be one peculiar to this world. Yes, I can't wait to find one."

When we unify the peninsula, I'll have the country go find and dig up all the hot springs.

"I really want to enter everyday, if possible. Can't we do something?"

Tetra asks while twining herself on my left arm. Although not as much as Julia's, I can reliably feel a certain elasticity. Personally speaking, I prefer this sensation.

Do something? Like what?

"Like transport by carriage?"

"It would cost not an insignificant sum."

"You're king so this much luxury is appropriate. Aren't the tax revenues higher than those from the previous king's time?"

After the civil war, territories under direct royal control have doubled.

Including the original Ars Territory, now there are the territories from the opposition and the DeBell territory plus the territories conquered from the DeMorgal Kingdom.

Furthermore, there's the ((new)) garnet trade.

While not all the new territory came under direct royal control since, naturally, I distributed some amongst the great clansmen that supported me, quite a lot had still been added.

Bolus was given the territories around Fort Terrier.

Although it's a strategic location that connects the old and new territories, Bolus should probably be able to hold on to it.

I'm at a loss, on the other hand, with Bartolo.

Naturally, he should also receive some territory but... regrettably, his ability is too high.

After much deliberation, I finally settled with relocating him to a new territory. It's about 1.5 times larger so he shouldn't have any complaints.

Furthermore, his abilities should be more than enough to defend against the DeMorgal Kingdom.

I gave Ron, Roswald, and Gram territories near direct royal possessions since I'll still have them help me in the palace from here on out.

Therefore, there's probably no need for them to live in the crown territories.

The most troublesome one was King Rosyth's relative, Raymond who had the honor of playing a leading role.

He possesses one of the three salt mines in the country. I had hinted at relocating him to another territory three times larger, but he had refused with a smile. Well, that's par the course.

Well, there would be a danger of worsening our relations if I had unreasonably forced his relocation, so I settled with increasing his present territory just by a little.

"If possible, I want to completely slice away the power of the great clansmen."

"Yes... if only that were possible..."

Tetra murmurs her agreement.

It's evident that the great clansmen are a hindrance to the smooth management of the country.

This is not a problem of good or bad government.

Their very existence is limitless inefficiency.

Not only do you need their agreement in wartime, you also have to be vigilant against

those who might defect to another country. Great clansmen defecting is a common occurrence.

“However, the centralization of power is progressing quite smoothly, you know. I think we shouldn’t have to worry that much about local clansmen.”

Thanks to the flashy way we handled the recent civil war, no great clansmen is in open opposition.

Using forced relocations, we succeeded in resetting their influence on their respective territories.

The problem is...

“The central clansmen headed by Raymond.”

Tetra murmurs.

The central clansmen are tentatively allied to me, having the same objective of curbing the power of local clansmen. They want to strengthen the power of the Rosyth clan.

They possess small/confined territory.

However, because they hold territories surrounding and within the direct royal possessions, they have an extremely strong influence on the center.

Moreover, the people who put me in power were Raymond et. al.

I am in a situation where I have to hold them in high regard.

From the very beginning, the reason they had chosen me as king is that I don’t have any decent relatives.

While the Ars clansmen are my relatives, they are not close and intimate with me. While I do have hereditary retainers, at best they number only around 30 people. That’s why in the management of the country, I would certainly have to rely on the Rosyth clan.

My abilities and any other things didn’t matter. If I had been incompetent, they would have made me a puppet though.

Unlike Regal, the only relatives I could and would have to rely on were the Rosyth clansmen, so that made it easier for them.

I want to go and thoroughly inquire and reconcile our interests. We should be the same in wanting to decrease the great clansmen's power and advance the centralization of power, after all.

"By the way, are you serious on uniting the Adernia Peninsula?"

"Yeah, I'm serious. I had thought for a long time that would be a good idea if possible. However, just thinking won't make that into reality.

The reason disputes won't die out in the Adernia peninsula is that it's not unified after all.

If you unite them once and laid down the foundations, then they'll become more difficult to divide.

"Then who are we going to attack first?"

"That would depend on the circumstances. We'll first begin with strengthening our national power."

The foundation is important in any endeavor.

A building whose foundations aren't properly staked on the ground would lean after all.

"A, wait..."

I cling to Julia. I then creep my tongue on the nape of her neck while caressing her lavender-colored hair.

"We also need to properly decide on the crown prince."

The Royal Succession Problem.

It's the greatest problem that always follow a monarchical country. Aside the Rosyth Kingdom, a lot of other countrys are also tormented by this problem. There are also a lot of well known cases from history.

While things would settle down once a crown prince has been designated, the one fed such a golden spoon might grow into a foolish king.

Conversely, putting off designating one would cause great troubles.

If the king dies before being able to designate a successor, or, if, for example, the king did declare one but his retainers twist and lie about the heir, or if another prince himself disputes that such a designated succession is a lie so that he may take the throne for himself, naturally a civil war will occur.

“Almis... Julia’s child would be fine as crown prince. That way, there won’t be any trouble in the country.”

“Is that so?... Thank you.”

I lick her ear to return the favor. Her body quivers in response.

I then ask her while tracing her white back with my finger.

“As I thought, would it be better to choose the crown prince with the acknowledgment that he’d be a foolish ruler?”

“N... there would be faults in any system. I think that would be second best. There needs to be a system to administer the country in itself even if the King is foolish.

That’s true, huh... that would be the best though.

Though I think the bureaucratic system I’m recommending is better in that point if you think about it...

A bureaucracy that has not decayed is pretty much like cheese that hasn’t gone bad after all.

Well, you could also say that meat that has rotten just a little bit is much more delicious.

There’s a need to create a system that will oversee the bureaucracy.

I guess it’s better to think about it on the way.

The present number of bureaucrats are too few, so decay couldn't be helped.

"What direction do you plan to take in domestic affairs, Almis? You had said that you'd curb the powers of the great clansmen but, what exactly do you have in mind?"

Julia asks me while pushing her chest on me. Her breasts are being pushed on mine.

"Let's see... I want to directly gather taxation from all the territories. The great clansmen's territories won't be exempt, of course. After that, I would maybe move the power towards the common people..."

"To the common people?"

Tetra makes a doubtful face.

"Yes. As an opposing force against the great clansmen. Well, it would naturally progress, you know – depending on the spread of crop rotation and the monetary economy. Besides, we also receive strong influence from Cretians, right?"

"...if we did that, won't they absolutely demand suffrage in the future?"

"Yeah, that's quite true..."

If a country becomes wealthy, interest would naturally shift towards government. However, that's an inevitable outcome, if I were to unify the Adernia peninsula.

If you have repeatedly recruited commoners into the military, naturally the commoners' influence would increase. Commoner hoplites would make up the core of the army after all.

The more the territories increase, the more there would be landed farmers. The more slaves increase, their price would go down and even the commoners would be able to afford them.

If we poorly tried to prevent such, then we might become on the receiving end of the people's ire.

If the monetary economy spreads, accompanying its disease-like spread would be the Cretian ideology of democracy.

If we deepen our relations with the Cretians and try to modernize the country, sooner or later, democracy would put down its roots on the commoners all over the country, right?

Then should we drive out the Cretians?

If we did that then the idea of unifying the Adernia peninsula will become distant. No, it would probably become impossible.

We have no choice but to accept them.

Rather, we should seriously utilize them.

That being said, that's still a story for later.

It's no use even if we discuss it now.

It's a story only for when we've settled down and considered things carefully.

I don't have any intention to stop the monarchial system.

I, as I thought, want my children to inherit what I have myself built-up.

In the first place, education for all is a critical element in democracy.

Therefore, it is an inappropriate concept for the Adernia peninsula where only a few people could read and write.

Democratic governance works because there exist small units of governance.

The northern Adernia peninsula... the territories north of the Rosyth Kingdom are completely changing into state territories.

Or perhaps, I should say, that even the Cretians, who have a level of civilization several times higher than the Adernians, fall into ((pitfalls associated with democracy such as)) falling into mob-rule or the outbreak of tyrants.

I can't say that it's the fitting system of government for my goal of a united Adernia peninsula.

In the end, all historical democracies of the ancient era have collapsed and transitioned into monarchies.

In a word, monarchy is the most suitable system in the ancient and middle ages where the power of religion is strong and where ideologies, science, and technology are undeveloped.

That being said, somebody somewhere said that 'While Democracy is the worst, it's the least objectionable amongst the government systems that have been tried up until now.'

Besides, things that will spread will spread out.

We will need to compromise with that point, right?

I need to keep this in mind.

"You're making a difficult face. Ei!"

Julia splashes water on to me, startling me.

It seems I've gotten immersed in my thoughts.

"Aa, sorry, sorry.... since it's about time, should we get out of the bath?"

"N, let's do that."

We get out of the bath.

Let's come again.

CHAPTER 78

DIPLOMACY I

The thing that I must begin in the outset is to consolidate the country.

There remain some grudges from the gaudy execution of the recent purge.

I need to loosen the tensions within the country.

Nonetheless, the people, notably those of the Ars and Rosyth clans, are working hard for me.

Even in the former DeBell faction members showed extreme loyalty, with some even handing over some hostages.

Time will probably sort this out.

What I need to start to start now is international diplomacy.

The countries that directly border us are the Belvedere Kingdom on the south, the Eville Kingdom on the west, the Equus tribe's country on the east, and the De Morgal Kingdom on the north.

We're surrounded splendidly on all four directions.

The Equus country is currently friendly with us while the De Morgal Kingdom is hostile.

The Eville and Belvedere Kingdoms, on the otherhand, have slightly bad relations with us.

In the same vein that the De Morgal Kingdom is a threat for us, the Rosyth Kingdom is a huge threat for the Eville and Belvedere Kingdoms.

In the first place, (before I ascended the throne) the Rosyth kingdom has a population of around 170,000 while the Eville and Belvedere Kingdoms have 100,000 each.

It may not seem like it but it's quite a difference in national power.

However, the Rosyth Kingdom had been embroiled in internal troubles and foreign threats up until now that it has never been able to sufficiently exercise that power.

That's where I, a young new Rosyth King, entered the picture.

Because a national census still hasn't been performed so I couldn't say for sure but the Rosyth Kingdom's present population should be around 230,000.

Well, in the same way I only know an estimate of another country's population, the two countrys too ((Eville and Belvedere)) only know an estimate of my country's population. And in the aftermath of the war with the De Morgal Kingdom, it's easy to imagine how much our national power grew.

Besides, national power is something that's expressed not only by population and agricultural output.

The Eville Kingdom, for example, possesses early stage iron manufacturing techniques which exceeds the one we have in quality.

The Belvedere Kingdom is near Cretian colonies and are ahead of us in architectural technology and government systems.

However, that superiority is crumbling.

Our country had also become able to manufacture ironware and has begun employing Cretians.

And most of all, Centralized Government.

Our Rosyth Kingdom had greatly advanced in that department in the recent civil war.

We managed to mobilize our army several times faster than other countries.

Furthermore, I had just rapidly rose to power, so I still haven't shown them my nature and disposition. It couldn't be helped if the two countries are afraid.

Now that I have set forth to unify the Adernia peninsula, there is of course the intention to annex, vassalize, or subjugate those two countries.

That said, it's still too early.

I want to focus on domestic affairs for a while without waging any wars.

Besides, it's a truly dreadful matter to be put in a position where you're encircled.

If this were a war tactic simulation multiplayer game, then if you imprudently kept winning too much then the surrounding countries will all come together and gang up on you.

A great example in history is Nobunaga's encirclement and alliance plans.

In a word, relationships with one's neighbors are very very important.



The first country I headed for is the Equus country.

We have what you may call an important alliance and Muzio had sent us a written invitation just at the right time. It's an invitation for a wedding.

Yes, that guy is also finally getting married.

I was the first one to come over to the Equus country. The last time, it was Lord Equus who came over for my coronation.

Therefore, it's my turn again to come over to the Equus country.

I'll be accompanied by Julia and Raymond, as well as Roswald and his subordinates as escorts.

The others have their own things to take care of.

The first one I'll be greeting is Lord Equus. Then I would be greeting the crown prince, Prince Methyl.

Or rather, I was greeted instead.

Since I had the higher status, they had instead come to greet me.

“It’s been a while. King Rosyth. It’s a pleasure to have you again.”

“Please, it’s also good to see you in good health. How is your esteemed mother, by the way?”

I ask while purposely letting the third prince Ledus hear.

I have filled it with undertones of petty malice and diversion.

To be frank, since I’ve already become King, my weakness that Lord Equus had grasped had lost its meaning.

In otherwords, I’m in a superior position.

“She has become very well thanks to Lady Julia. Her excellency has my utmost thanks.”

Methyl expresses with sincere happiness.

It would seem the rumors... that the crown prince has a docile and gentle disposition with little martial qualities is true.

If he becomes Lord Equus, then we’ll be able to continue to stand shoulder to shoulder as allies.

It would be a problem if the next lord were quite capable after all.



The next person I greet is the occasion’s leading actor, Muzio.

“Thank you for coming, King Rosyth.”

“Well, it’s only natural for a person to come to their friend’s marriage ceremony.”

The two of us exchange handshakes.

This guy is a guy that can more or less read the atmosphere, so as one would expect he had refrained from using casual speech to a king of a country. He’s still quite a rough speaker though.

“This girl’s Rachaela. She’s the woman who’ll become my wife.”^[TLN1]

Muzio points to the woman waiting behind him.

“How do you do, King Rosyth? I apologize for not being able to greet you last time... I was ill in bed.”

“Oh please, let’s not worry about that.”

Rachaela politely bows her head.

She has long black hair and gentle droopy eyes.

Her breasts are huge. It’s the biggest amongst all I’ve seen.

If Tetra’s a light cruiser and Julia’s a heavy cruiser, this girl’s a dreadnought class battleship. All Hail the Big Ship Big Gun Doctrine!

Well, since I’m not that attached to size even though I love breasts, I personally felt nothing except surprise.

I whisper to Muzio’s ear.

“Come to think of it, what happened to the inverse scale (gekirin)?”

“I’ll give it to her during the ceremony. Absolutely don’t talk about it.”

I see, it’s a surprise, huh.

“The wedding ceremony will last for three days. Please enjoy yourselves.”

Muzio gives an expression that doesn’t suit him.

Now then, next would be the third prince, Ledus, huh.

“...It’s been a while, King Rosyth.”

“...Yes, it has, Lord Ledus. I see you are in good health...”

What’s with this guy... How can he be so gloomy.

His eyes are dead and he's giving off a hard to approach aura.

I thought about saying something but, Ledus goes away after giving a bow.

What the heck?



The wedding ceremony was held in three days.

On the first day, a banquet was held. This is so that the Equus tribe could deepen their friendships among themselves. This time, our country is added to that circle.

On the second day is the provisional marriage ceremony.

It's called provisional because the two will only be saying their vows to their families, the citizens, and the retainers.

They would say their vows to the gods on a different ceremony.

That said, the most extravagant amongst the ceremonies is this provisional marriage ceremony.

The guests will give their gifts and words of congratulations to the newly-weds.

By the way, the gifts were 60% sheep, 30% slaves, and the remaining 10% were fine horses.

As expected of the Equus tribe.

By the way, my country offered wine and olive oil as gifts.

The Equus tribe could grow much of them so they were very delighted.

We also gave the bride a garnet necklace and the groom a dragon Damascus sword ordered from Ains.

The garnet necklace, however, might have been a blunder.

It has become a foil to the inverse scale ornament given by Muzio to Rachaela. Well, I

guess things could have gone better but this is also fine.

And on the third day, the real marriage ceremony was held.

In short, they will give their vows to the gods.

Well, it wasn't interesting at all. All the sorcerers offered sheep as sacrifice and gave prayers, saying something like "Gods and honorable ancestors, we give you thanks. We will marry. From hereon, we will do our best for the sake of the Equus tribe."

Honestly speaking, in my point of view, it was boring. It's because, as a man from the Rosyth Kingdom, I have no idea regarding the ancestors and gods of the Equus tribe.

Julia, on the other hand, seems to be enjoying it. Well, I guess it's fine if she's having fun.



The next day, Julia and I went on separate appointments. She went to give the third consort another medical exam while I went to Lord Equus and Crown Prince Methyl to reaffirm the alliance.

"Now then, Lord Equus. Let me repeat, I am the new king of the Rosyth Kingdom, Almis Ars Rosyth. Regards."

"Umu, Regards."

We first exchange handshakes.

I then exchange glances with Prince Methyl. He's the next king so he'll be participating in these talks.

This way, when the time comes, the alliance can be smoothly inherited.

"First, let me again say our thanks. We were saved by your 300 soldiers in the previous war. They outdid themselves in action."

I say my thanks from the bottom of my heart.

Their power in actual circumstances was very splendid. I'll never let go of them.

“With regards to horses, there’s no country in the Adernia Peninsula that can outdo us. It’s only natural. Now then... First, shall we talk about foreign trade?”

“Our country desires wool and horses, the same as always. After that, we would be delighted with wolf pelt, tyrannosaur tusk and scales but...”

We’re dying for those materials... Actually, not really.

The Rosyth Kingdom can grow horses and sheep.

What we really want is military power. Only that.

“I see. We, too, will go with before – wheat and wine. Furthermore, if you have leeway, we want you to sell us ironware. The Lupus tribe, just like us, have no ironware. Therefore, if we get such tools, we’ll be able to wield an advantage.”

Hmmm... well, I guess it’s fine if it’s just that much

While it would be terrible if they were to aim that fang towards us... it’s too late to be thinking about that after all that’s happened.

It’s much more convenient compared to being asked for troops and reinforcements, after all. I don’t think our country with an infantry based army would be able to fight effectively against a nomadic nation.

“Understood. However, we won’t be able to send around that much. We have to prioritize our military preparations, after all.”

“We understand. Then we shall request from you as much as you can. Oh yes... by the way...”

Lord Equus places a white stone-like thing before me.

No, it’s changing to a slightly pink color. This is...

“This is rock salt mined from our territory.”

“Oh really?...”

Hmmm, this is quite a problem.

If the price of rock salt goes down, our country's income would also go down. Rock salt is one of the supporting pillars of our national treasury.

"The problem is we don't have the technology to efficiently dig up these salts. So we have a proposition. Won't you give us technical support? In exchange, we will sell you the rock salt on the cheap."

On the cheap... in other words, lower than list price.

That's not a bad proposition. If we sold the salt to the Cretians, we should be able to obtain enough profits plus we would be resolving the trade frictions too.

But why?

The one who answered my question was Methyl who had been silent up until now.

"On the south of our country lies the Lupus Tribe. Because of them, our country couldn't trade with the Cretians. Furthermore, the Cretians couldn't expressly stock up on goods in our country. Therefore, I thought that entrusting the trade to you gentlemen of the Rosyth kingdom would yield better results. Besides, we are not that skillful in commerce."

Well, that makes sense.

What the Equus tribe want are wheat and wine rather than gold and silver coins and much less so goods such as goldware and Persis glass.

Therefore, bartering with the Rosyth Kingdom would yield more profits... while this might be strange, it will lead to their desired results.

Since profits would rise, there's no particular reason for us to refuse. Rather, deterioration of relations would be a problem.

"I see. That would also be profitable for us. Yes, we'll support your proposal. However, regarding the specific price..."

That day's meeting continued up until midnight.



“Aa...”

Ledus is at his wit's ends alone.

His face is marred with the color of fatigue and traces of tears.

It's as if he were a baby that had cried his heart out. No, he had actually cried himself to exhaustion.

Why is Ledus crying? The reason is Muzio and Rachaela's wedding.

In short, he was heartbroken.

The history of Ledus' affection towards Rachaela goes back up to around 10 years from now.

If you put that history into a composition, it would be comparatively boring and take more than 10,000 characters so we'll spare ourselves from that.

By the way, Rachaela doesn't think the least bit at all about Ledus' loving her.

She had completely set her sights on Muzio even before, plus Ledus and Rachaela, from the very beginning, hadn't spoken with each other that much.

In her point of view, it's to the level of 'Ledus? Aa, he's the Third Prince, yes? What about him?'

Now then, why didn't Ledus open his heart to Rachaela? Was it because he was a chicken?

That's a part of it.

Ledus is confident in the martial arts but he couldn't take a single step when it comes to the critical moment.

Perhaps indecisive is the suitable word.

However, it's not just that.

The reason is simple. It's a faction problem.

There are three internal factions in the Equus tribe.

First, the faction of Prince Methyl who was the child of the third consort, the first to give birth to a male despite her low social status.

Another is the faction of Prince Muzio, the prince that seems uninterested in the succession, and son of the second consort, the second to give birth to a male and with high social status.

Third is the faction of Prince Ledus, son of the first consort who, despite having a high social status, was the last to give birth to a male.

Around the time Ledus was seven years old, the first consort's faction grew in power and they managed to obtain assurance that he will become the patriarch.

Even so, somehow the second consort threw her support to the third consort.

There were several reasons but there are two main reasons.

First, the second consort doesn't lust for power, so if their lives were being aimed at, a plot to push it all on the third consort would be better.

The other reason is the second consort's father.

Her father is great war chief (equivalent to a general) who, because of the existence of foreign pressure from the Lupus tribe, embraces the thought that the country must not be divided because of such a trifling matter.

Consequently, the second consort's father decided to support the old custom that 'the first born will succeed as chief' and that, in accordance with that, Prince Methyl must succeed.

Thus, as proof of their alliance, they promised to have Muzio marry Rachaela, a relative of the third consort.



In short, to Ledus, Rachaela is a political opponent's relative.

Since even telling his feelings was impossible, marriage and such would be absurd.

"Aa... aa... who gives a damn about chiefhood..."

It's not like Ledus wants to become the tribe chief.

While it's only natural for him to have the intention to become chief because he does have an above-average lust for power, if he had to choose, he would rather have Rachaela.

The most enthusiastic would be the mother rather than the son. Well, it's a story you often hear.

"Why I have a wonderful proposal for you!! Why, even now you can get both Rachaela and the chiefhood, you know!!"

An unusually excited voice enters Ledus' ears.

Ledus turns around and finds a black haired girl before him.

From the color of her skin you could see that she's not around from here... or at the very least you could see that she's not Adernian.

The woman comes closer to Ledus.

"Stop!! Don!!"

Ledus suddenly couldn't move his mouth.

No, it's not just his mouth. You could say that his whole body had become stone.

The woman holds Ledus' cheeks with both her hands.

"Fufu, it's pointless, you know. You've already fallen to my curse, so you won't be able to slip out of it. Nevertheless, your sorcerers' level is low, huh. That's why your curses were easily discovered by Princess Julia, you know."

The woman looks eye to eye with Ledus.

Ledus' eyelids are completely motionless, not even with a twitch. He couldn't even manage to turn his eyes away.

"Now then, regarding what you must do. It's simple, you know. Just kill your father and your two brothers. Kill all those who resist you. The method is simple. I'll be teaching it to you. That way, you'll be able to secure your position as tribal chief plus get Rachaela. Yes?"

The woman then leaves after talking to Ledus.

Ledus, who was left there, looks around in confusion.

"What the? What did just happen? I can't... remember..."

He looks around restlessly for a while, but nothing had changed.

It's as if time had jumped.

Ledus climbs up the bed while thinking about the problem.



"Hmm, is wonder if this is good performance? The shortest I could say is two months. Thereupon, when you think about the preparations... as expected would it be after a year? Well, we have to set this up on other countries too, huh. Need to be steady."

The girl – Mari – is walking through the plains while skipping.

She was able to invade for the preparations thanks to entering via air. In the first place, Elly is a black flying dragon so she doesn't stand out that much and since she could manipulate the wind there's little danger of being noticed due to the wind pressure. Furthermore, she had a collaborator from within as well.

"Iyaa, Ledus-kun being a weak rascal saved us a lot of trouble, huh. Normally, things don't go this smoothly after all."

Hypnotism using sorcery. This is quite difficult.

First, the target himself should have little qualms against it. You'd normally notice it being cast upon you after all.

Tying the target up and repeatedly applying hypnotic suggestions at him to brainwash him would be easy but... kidnapping Ledus would be too big of an affair.

However, in a stroke of luck, Ledus himself doesn't have that much of a resistance and at the same time he's also collapsed emotionally.

Furthermore, the person himself is aiming for a woman and the status of chief.

It wouldn't take that much labor to 'motivate' him a little.

"The problem is if I get found out on the way, huh...

Oh, yeah! Come to think of it, wouldn't it be better to confidently penetrate them as a guest from the Rozel Kingdom? Let's contact Ledus under the shape of consultation... that's good!! Let's do that!!"



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